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LONDON.

AND

PARIS,

OR

COMPARATIVE SKETCHES.

BY

THE MARQUIS DE VERMONT,

AND

SIR CHARLES DARNLEY, BART.

97840

——————— Nothing extenuate,
Nor aught set down in malice.

SHAKESPEARE.

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TO

MRS. OPIE,

AS A TESTIMONY OF FRIENDSHIP,

AND

A TRIBUTE OF ADMIRATION

OFFERED

LESS TO HER WELL-KNOWN TALENTS

THAN

TO THE FILIAL PIETY AND MORAL EXCELLENCE

WHICH RENDER HER LIFE

AN EXAMPLE

OF THOSE VIRTUES OF WHICH

HER GENIUS

HAS BEEN UNIFORMLY THE ADVOCATE,

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED.

PREFACE.

MOST of the letters contained in this volume have already appeared in the European Magazine.

Whether the Editor has been properly advised in giving the whole its present form, the Public must determine.

Viewed separately, London and Paris are trite subjects; but perhaps in no prior work have the manners of these Capitals been alternately examined and compared.

How the manuscript letters came into his hands, by whose orders they were sent to the Press, it is unnecessary to explain. Suffice it to say, that in publishing them no breach of confidence has been committed.

Whatever may be the fate of this book, it is confidently hoped that the object aimed at will not be thought an improper one;—To combat national prejudice by showing, in the correspondence of two Gentlemen of equal character and respectability, how very differently the same objects appear to natives and foreigners.

The trouble of the Editor will be amply repaid, should the perusal of these letters tend, in however small a degree, to soften those antipathies which have so long divided the two wisest and most powerful nations of modern Europe.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

LETTER I.—*From Sir Charles Darnley, Bart., at Paris, to the Marquis de Vermont in London.*

ARRIVAL at Paris—disappointments of the writer at the absence of his friend—proposes a regular correspondence and exchange of observation—reflections on landing in France—a French inn and waiter—Normandy—*table d'hôte* and conversation at it. ..... p. 1

LETTER II.—*From the Marquis de Vermont in London to Sir Charles Darnley, Bart., at Paris.*

English inns—beds, fare and charges of such houses—English posting—scenery and travelling—first view of London.. 11

LETTER III.—*From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.*

First *Quinzaine Angloise* of the writer at Paris—variety of amusements—exterior decorum of all classes—silence at public places—French eating—account of a French gentleman's dinner at Beauvillier's—&c. 22

LETTER IV. *From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley.*

Tyranny of Fashion in London—late hours in the fashionable world contrasted with those of lawyers, merchants, &c.—lounge in Bond Street—shopping—promenade in Hyde Park, &c. 30

LETTER V.—*From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.*

Visit to a French Duchess—her political lamentations and matrimonial speculations—inquiries about, and regular registry of, English heiresses—*Hymeneal jobbing*—dialogue between a French Marquis and an English young lady, with the arithmetical calculations of the former—&c. ..... p. 40

LETTER VI.—*From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley.*

Apology for the Duchess—"*mariages de convenance*" often prove very happy—freedom of manners observed in English young Ladies—matrimonial speculations no less common in England than in France—anecdote on this subject—dialogue overheard between an English Countess and her daughter on the choice of partners at a ball—with rules for the acceptance and rejection of the same—similar conversations—&c. 50

LETTER VII.—*From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.*

General manner of spending time among the English at Paris—the writer introduced into French society—French habit of paying rounds of visits after dinner—respect shown to age—publicity with which every thing is discussed in French society—negotiation between two noble dames, for an exchange of invitations to a ball—&c. 64

LETTER VIII.—*From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley.*

The writer visits persons of various ranks and fortunes, and finds every where the same kind of entertainment—his surprise at this circumstance—affectation of French dishes and French names—barbarously used—the English take more pains in the arrangement of their dishes than the choice of

their company—a great London dinner described—disappearance of the ladies—*Ledger account* kept for the exchange of dinners—first- and *second-hand* dinners—the same described in verse—passion for quadrilles—&c. ..... p. 72

LETTER IX.—*From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.*

Bals costumés, or fancy balls—description of an entertainment of this kind given by a Parisian lady to the children of her friends—copy of a printed paper distributed on the occasion—the liveliness and gaiety of the scene—&c. 84

LETTER X.—*From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley.*

Contradictions observed in English manners—homage paid to rank—foreigners great gainers by the translation of their titles into English ones—the writer derives much advantage from the circumstance—vanity the grand object of English society—crowds assembled and characters amalgamated at a fashionable assembly—publication of the same in the newspapers—reflections, &c. 91

LETTER XI.—*From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.*

Gaiety of the streets and gardens of Paris contrasted with the gloom of the evening *soirées*—general dislike of the English—the writer kindly treated by the friends of his correspondent, but experiences a very opposite conduct from others—the few English who gain admittance into French society find but little encouragement to use that privilege... 101

LETTER XII.—*From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley.*

The real character of a nation can only be known after a long

residence—the most notorious, the least respectable characters met with in London—picture of a private English family—dialogue between the writer and a noble Countess on the subject of that family—the omnipotence of *a certain set*. . . . . p. 111

LETTER XIII.—*From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.*

The French the best actors in the world—the gloom complained of in a former letter attributed to an anxious desire of preserving appearances—the Parisians go into company to play a part—anecdote relating to this, and strange discovery made—general decency of exterior deportment—description of a ball given at a Parisian *Hell*, or common gaming-house. 121

LETTER XIV.—*From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley.*

The subject of *a certain set* resumed—to be considered a member of that community, the general object of ambition in the societies of London—conversations on that head—Argyle-street Rooms—exertions to get thither—manœuvres practised and sacrifices made to attain that point—*Almack's* French plays—anecdote of an actor who performed in one of these—plan suggested and recommended for a rival *Coterie* to be confined exclusively to the families of Commoners. 128

LETTER XV.—*From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.*

Pride and pretensions of *l'ancienne Noblesse Françoise*—the reception of an English lady at the house of a returned emigrant *Marquise*—conversation between a French Count and a British Peer on the subject of a distinguished Marshal in his presence, and almost in his hearing—distinction between the respect paid to rank in London and that which is exacted by persons of the old Court at Paris—the *Emigrés* have learnt

nothing in the school of adversity—French politicians on both sides are *Ultras*. . . . . p. 137

LETTER XVI.—*From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley.*

The politicians of England not less entitled to the name of *Ultras* than those of France—the old Whigs form the only exception to this observation. 146

LETTER XVII.—*From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.*

Observations on the French stage—the comic acting at *le Theatre François* much admired—the writer gives an account of the performance of Moliere's "*Malade Imaginaire*," and of the *divertissement* by which that farce was followed—he is particularly pleased with the examination of Dr. Diafoirus, before the College of Physicians, and offers an English translation of the same. 155

LETTER XVIII.—*From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley.*

Difference of taste between the French and English—the former go to their Theatres to be amused—the latter, to show themselves—splendid appearance of the audience at the Opera-house in the Haymarket on a Saturday night—the same seen in the presence of the King—inconvenience of the excessive size of the London Theatres—this is the cause both of the degeneration of the drama and of the indecent scenes which occur in English play-houses—smaller and more numerous theatres would be a great improvement. 167

LETTER XIX.—*From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.*

Prevalence of the military spirit in France—scene demonstra-

tive of this at the opening of the Theatre of *M. Le Compte* in the *Rue Mont Thabor*—anecdote of a French lady's servant taken by the Requisition—many of the old *Noblesse* among the *Officiers à demi-solde*, and agreeing with them in sentiment—danger to France and to Europe, should a systen of peace be exchanged for one of war..... p. 176

LETTER XX.—*From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley.*

The love of country in feeling no less prevalent or powerful in England, than the love of military renown in France—all classes of Britons take pride in the battle of Waterloo—that name given to various streets, coaches, &c.—the English no less apt than the French to claim superiority over the rest of the world—&c..... 183

LETTER XXI.—*From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.*

Public *fêtes* at Paris—the *Jour de l'An*—*Etrennes*—appearance of the Palais Royal on New Year's Day—anniversary of the death of Louis XVI.—the Royal Family go to St. Denys on that day—*bon-mot* of the Parisians—*Mardi-gras* masqueraders about the streets—facility with which the French make themselves happy—&c..... 192

LETTER XXII.—*From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley.*

Cheap pleasures preferable to expensive ones—simplicity of a French bourgeois' day of amusement contrasted with that of an English citizen—public shows no less popular in England than in France—but few of the former as innocent in their consequences as those of the latter—Lord Mayor's Day—Christmas festivities—Easter Monday—May-day—Chimney-sweepers—their dinner at Mr. Montagu's—fairs in the vicinity of London—bull-fights, boxing-matches, &c.—

simplicity with which friends are received at Paris contrasted with the pretended family dinners of a London party—extravagance common to all classes in England. .... p. 201

LETTER XXIII.—*From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.*

Visit to the *Chateau de Vincennes*—spot where the Duke d'Enghien was killed and first buried—expiatory chapel—anniversary of his death kept as a holiday—stories related at Paris on the day of his execution—visit to the cell in the Conciergerie, where Marie Antoinette was confined, now converted into an expiatory chapel—every thing objectionable attributed by the opposite factions at Paris, either to the Revolution or the Restoration—all persons blinded by party prejudices. 214

LETTER XXIV.—*From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley.*

The vast architectural improvements lately made in London—these, and most of the great public establishments of England, dependent on private speculation—innumerable proofs of the unimpaired resources and progressive wealth of Great Britain—Regency and reign of George IV. 221

LETTER XXV.—*From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.*

The writer answers his correspondent's observation on public and private buildings—improvements in London—improvements in Paris—scene witnessed in the *Bois de Boulogne*—the humanity of the Duchess de Berry—effeminacy and terrors of a French youth contrasted with the probable conduct of an English boy of the same age—public education recommended to France—the advantages derived from it in England—almost all our distinguished men were brought up at

public institutions—the benefit to the Constitution derived therefrom—names of a few persons so educated.... p. 229

LETTER XXVI.—*From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley.*

The writer becomes interested in the perusal of English newspapers—expresses his astonishment at the rapidity with which they are printed and dispersed—abuse of the liberty of the Press—attacks on royal and female personages—indecent reports of certain trials—*ultra*-zeal of opposing factions—the writer doubts the utility of an unrestricted Press, and asks on this subject the opinion of his correspondent... 241

LETTER XXVII.—*From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.*

The writer defends the establishment of an unrestricted Press—a free Press no less useful to the Government than to the People—prevents conspiracies—benefits private morals, and is a check on the administration of justice—a free Press recommended to France, as the only means of qualifying the people for the enjoyment of civil liberty..... 248

LETTER XXVIII.—*From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley.*

In spite of the many splendid entertainments given in London, nothing so scarce as *real society*—the English more difficult of access, and less easily known, than their continental neighbours—strangers rarely admitted when paying accidental visits—confusion which the arrival of an unexpected visiter produces in an English family—things in this respect better managed in France—folly of assuming a mask by which no one is deceived..... 255

LETTER XXIX.—*From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.*

The writer allows that vanity is the cause of English extravagance—but attributes to the love of *home* the disinclination of Englishmen to receive indiscriminate visits—*impromptu* dinners attended with some inconvenience—scene at a Parisian dinner of this sort described—the habit of English ladies retiring after dinner justified—foreigners like or dislike London according to the duration of their residence in that city..... p. 261

LETTER XXX.—*From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley.*

The writer, being about to leave London, wishes to draw a general sketch—but from the multiplicity of objects finds the attempt impracticable—views London therefore only as a place of residence —of those who go thither in pursuit of amusement few will be satisfied—who these few are—private and public entertainments—not many diversions accessible to unprotected strangers—power of *great names* in London displayed on all occasions—*reflected* dignity of the Peerage —*blue-stocking* parties—nothing valued in London which is not obtained with difficulty—obstacles which a foreigner meets with at every step—what these obstacles are—London only agreeable to strangers well recommended, or to such as come hither in pursuit of useful information..... 271

LETTER XXXI.—*From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.*

The writer acknowledges the influence of great names in London, but contends that they are equally powerful in France—this instanced in an anecdote related of a French gentleman's wedding, and his account of the preparations for the same—the English and French should learn to esteem each other, and to disdain any praise offered at the expense of a generous

rival—the English begin to lay aside many of their prejudices —examples proving the same—opposite conduct of the French—antipathy of all classes at Paris against the English—instances of that feeling—the *certain set* of London has an affiliated society at Paris—London only liked after a long residence—Paris pleases every body at first, and no one long..... p. 283

COMPARATIVE SKETCHES

OF

SOCIETY AND MANNERS

IN

LONDON AND PARIS.

LETTER I.

Sir Charles Darnley, Bart., at Paris, to the Marquis de Vermont in London.

MY DEAR VERMONT,

EVER since my return from America, where I spent so many happy days in your society, I have meditated a journey to Paris—to that Paris which you made me anxious to see, by the enthusiastic terms in which you used to speak of it. After having been prevented again and again, by a variety of circumstances, from carrying this favourite project into execution, I at last availed myself of the opportunity of being at Brighton, from which place packets sail daily for the coast of France—and embarking on board one of these vessels on Friday last, arrived here yesterday

evening. As one of my principal inducements for coming hither was the hope of renewing our former habits of intimacy, and, under your auspices, of seeing the Gallic capital to the greatest possible advantage, I need scarcely say how greatws my disappointment, when, on going this morning to your hotel, I learnt from your old Swiss porter that you were absent, and gone to London: the latter piece of intelligence has increased my chagrin; for I am thus not only deprived of your expected aid in piloting my way through the unknown regions of the French metropolis, but also of the sincere pleasure with which I should have offered you mine, in exploring the wonders of London.

On receiving these unwelcome tidings, I was so surprised, and so distressed, that had I allowed myself to be governed by my first impressions, I should immediately have ordered post-horses, and should have now been on my road back to England; in order, if I may be permitted to use a French phrase, *de vous faire les honneurs de mon pays.*

Having, however, allowed myself a few moments for reflection, (without which you know we sober English seldom take any decided step,) I begin to think that this apparent disappointment (which I have the vanity to believe you will regret no less than myself) may eventually prove favourable

to the attainment of the objects which we have mutually in view. No doubt, in visiting London, it is your wish, as it is mine in coming hither, to examine every thing with impartiality and fairness:—had you met me in England, or I met you in France, would this have been possible? The stranger, respecting the judgment of his resident friend, would have been implicitly governed by his opinions—admiring what he admired, and censuring what he censured; he would have lost all the pleasure of first impressions, and would have seen none of the objects of curiosity presented to his attention with unprejudiced eyes. Left to ourselves, we shall doubtless be both guilty of many ridiculous mistakes; and, with the precipitancy so common to all travellers, we shall alike praise and condemn improperly:—still, let us determine to communicate to each other our respective remarks and observations with the utmost candour; and the errors of each may be subsequently corrected by the maturer knowledge of his correspondent. In losing my "*fidus Achates*," I shall, therefore, make a merit of necessity, and learn to depend on myself. Hoping that in your letters to me you will speak of England with no less freedom than I shall use towards you in talking of France, I shall throw aside all ceremony, and tell you honestly and freely what I think.

Having been only four days in France, and but

four-and-twenty hours at Paris, you will not expect in this first epistle that I should have much to say. Yet, perhaps, you will receive with a smile of good humour the crude reflections of an inexperienced foreigner, the novelty of whose situation may plead his excuse for innumerable faults.

In landing at Dieppe, I experienced (never having been before on the continent of Europe) all that surprise which prior tourists have described; and, indeed, after an expeditious voyage of a few hours, I found such a change of scene in all around me, that I seemed much more in a new world than when, after traversing the Atlantic, I set foot in America. There, the objects which presented themselves were all similar to those which I had left behind. The countenances of the people, their dress, their manners, and their language, were all the same. Here, every thing seemed metamorphosed. The darker complexions and more marked features of the crowds who thronged the shore—the large cocked hats and fierce looks of the military—the high head-dresses, and other peculiarities of the Norman costume, which the female peasantry displayed,—and the unaccustomed sounds of French and *Patois*, which assaulted my ears, presented altogether a picture so different from that which I had taken leave of a few hours before at Brighton, that I had some difficul-

ty in persuading myself that what I saw and heard was real, and not the phantom of a dream.

When I had sufficiently recovered my astonishment to observe them, I found myself surrounded with the importunate but civil emissaries of numerous inns; each of whom insisted, as he forced a card into my hand, that the house which he recommended was incomparably the best. The one to which, by the advice of a fellow passenger, I allowed myself to be conducted at Dieppe, as well as most of those at which I stopped on the road, afforded much better accommodations than I had been led to expect; but you must pardon me for observing, that I remarked in all of them an incongruity of the most extraordinary kind. The walls of the rooms were generally painted with arabesque figures, or otherwise ornamented—but the floors, rarely carpeted, were often tiled, and commonly far from clean. Every where we found magnificent looking-glasses, marble chimney-pieces, and *or-moulu* clocks of great value and beauty; while the doors would not shut, and the windows displayed many a broken pane: the beds were excellent, and the linen delicately white; but the furniture, of silk or satin, was often ragged, and sometimes dirty; and a mahogany dining-table seemed an unknown luxury.

I had an early specimen of the manners of your people, exhibited in those of a pert boy, about

fourteen years of age, who waited on me at dinner on the day of my landing. He displayed no trifling marks of that volubility, vivacity, and officious politeness, which are supposed to be inherent in Frenchmen of every class of society and at every period of life. But though no creature could be possibly more civil,—and he might well be called *rempli de grace*,—I was surprised at certain improprieties in his behaviour, of which the awkwardest clown in our island would be ashamed. When I asked him for drink, he took a small tumbler from the table (exactly such a one as we use in our dressing-rooms in England), and throwing some water which it contained under the cinders of the fire, wiped the glass with a dirty napkin which he carried under his arm, and then filled it with wine.

This seemed to me no very decorous mode of executing my commands; but my surprise increased, when, at the conclusion of the dinner, the same graceful youth, after removing the cloth, threw the crumbs of bread, parings of apples, orange peel, and other relics of the meal which it contained, under the table at which I sat, without attempting to sweep them away, or to offer any apology for what he had done.

In the course of conversation (for this pygmy waiter had chatted away during the whole of his services, and let me into all his secrets,) he

informed me, that he was very partial to the English, and was going very soon to Brighton, in order to learn our language, and to study our manners. I therefore took the liberty of hinting, that among other improvements which probably he would derive from his visit to Great Britain, I hoped he would discover, that (at least according to *our prejudices*) it was not very delicate to empty a glass in the fire-place, or to throw a cloth full of crumbs under the table. He stared, thanked me; and, seeming to be quite unconscious of having been guilty of the least impropriety, observed, as he shrugged up his shoulders, and walked out of the room, "*que chaque pays a ses usages.*"

In respect to the appearance of the country, I had heard much of the beauty of Normandy, and was not disappointed: it fully answered my expectations, particularly as we drove along the smiling banks of the Seine. The scenery is, indeed, delightful, and wants nothing to complete the landscape but some of those elegant villas, thatched cottages, and romantic villages, which are so common on the English side of the Channel. The specimens of Gothic architecture which the buildings of Rouen, and other towns which I traversed on my way to Paris, so profusely offer to the attention of the antiquary, I did not stop critically to examine; but what I saw

both pleased and surprised me, and perhaps, on some future occasion, I may be tempted to come hither again purposely to study these interesting edifices.

On the road, I made it my practice to dine at the *tables d'hôte*, both for the sake of society, and in order to have an opportunity of seeing the manners of the people who frequent them. At one of those dinners, finding that politics were the order of the day, I determined to take no share in the conversation, but to listen in silent attention.

One of the company, however, seemed resolved not to let me off so easily. From his dress, I concluded that he was an Abbé, and, from his mode of arguing, that he belonged to that party which bears in this country the name of Ultra-Royalist. —Having made some observations, which by his looks he seemed to expect that I should approve, but to which I neither expressed assent nor dissent, —"*Mais parlez donc, Monsieur l'Anglois,*" exclaimed he, "*et dites nous, n'est-il pas vrai que vous commencez d'éprouver dans votre pays les tristes effets des principes révolutionaires—que l'insurrection est organisée à Londres, l'armée séduite, et qu'un gouvernement provisoire s'est formé, chez le Lord Mayor?*"

Such seemed to be the current report of the day; and when I met this inquiry with a positive negative, I found the only point upon which the

company seemed disposed to agree, was to disbelieve my evidence; and in spite of the repeated assurances which I gave them, that I had left London perfectly quiet only two days before, my declarations produced no effect on these ardent politicians; and though they were too well bred to tell me I lied, I read in their countenances that such was their opinion.

In the course of the same conversation, I was informed (and many an Englishman has before heard the same news in France) that Bonaparte's return from Elba was a British manœuvre; that *l'affaire meurtrière de Mont St. Jean* (as the battle of Waterloo was called) was not a victory gained, but a fortunate escape on our part, on which occasion we owed our escape to the accidental arrival of the Prussians; and that the victor at Toulouse was not the Duke of Wellington, but Marshal Soult.

I have no doubt that you will find English *quid-nuncs* making very egregious errors in their estimate of the present state of France; but I apprehend you will scarcely meet with an instance of mis-statements so gross as those which I have just related; yet those who were guilty of them belonged to rather a higher class of society, consisting (besides ladies) of two ecclesiastics, several military men, and three returned emigrants on whose button-hole dangled the cross of St. Louis.

Of Paris, I have as yet only seen the principal features; and I am so bewildered with gazing at the various splendid objects which claim my attention, that I shall reserve my observations till another time.

For the present, then, adieu. I inclose some letters, which I hope will procure you an *entrée* into some of our most distinguished circles, in which you may study the English character *en beau*. As to John Bull in his rough garb, he is so very easily known, that I shall leave him, with all his faults and merits, to the unbiassed examination of your penetrating eye.

Believe me

Ever yours,

C. DARNLEY.

LETTER II.*

The Marquis de Vermont in London to Sir Charles Darnley, Bart., at Paris.

MY DEAR DARNLEY,

YOU English are such ramblers, that perhaps, of all places, home is the last where your friends have any chance of finding you. Deeply, therefore, as I share the disappointment, my dear Darnley, which you have had the kindness to express at our separation, I confess I am more grieved, than surprised, at your absence. You are very philosophical in discovering, that we may both derive some advantage from the singular coincidence, which sent you by one road to Paris while I took the other to London. This kind of moralizing, and drawing good from evil, is quite characteristic of your national disposition. I cannot be so reasonable, nor shall I ever cease to regret the loss of your valuable assistance in viewing this interesting country. But, as Fate has deprived me of so able a conductor, I must grope my way in the dark as well as I can; and after having done so, I shall avail myself of your permission,

* Translated from the original French.

and submit my remarks to the examination and correction of your superior judgment. Nor shall I hesitate, when I perceive in your observations on France any error which my local knowledge can set right, to point out to you the supposed mistake.

In reading your letter, I could not help smiling at some of your critiques. No one is more liberal than yourself; yet so difficult is it to divest one's self of early prejudices, that even you seem to consider all those incongruities which drew your notice on the road to Paris, as peculiar to the country which you are visiting; forgetting what a modern writer observes, with equal truth and neatness, "that inconsistency is the grand characteristic of man." I do not pretend to assert, that no absurdities can be found in our usages and manners; but in what region, inhabited by human beings, will no similar imperfections be discovered? In general, I believe, it is true, that in your favoured island more pains are taken to preserve a corresponding propriety in all you do or undertake, than elsewhere; but, even in England, do you think there are no inconsistencies?

I have, as yet, only spent one week in this proud Albion; yet I have not done so without perceiving that, in spite of its freedom, moral rectitude, and diffused knowledge, this country has still its contradictions.

To begin with the inns, which are generally, and perhaps justly, considered as superior to those on the Continent, and which some travellers have compared to the palaces of princes,—I confess that, in many respects, they deserve the praises which have been lavished on them. The civility of the landlords, and the almost troublesome attention of the waiters,—the well carpeted and well aired rooms, into which the fatigued stranger is conducted on his arrival,—the blazing fire,—the close-drawn curtains,—the handsome and easy sofa,—the side-board covered with glass and plate,—and the general cleanliness of all around, are circumstances well calculated to justify such encomiums. Now, notwithstanding these varied conveniencies, your most celebrated inns are deficient in many things essential to the comfort of a person accustomed to the manners and habits of the Continent.

When, after a boisterous though rapid voyage, I landed at Dover, and took up my quarters in one of the best hotels of that town, I was no less surprised than delighted at the manner in which I was welcomed to this house of public entertainment. The master of the establishment met me as I left the packet; and, hearing that I intended to be his lodger, insisted on being my guide, and walked before me to his dwelling, promising at the same time that he would himself see my lug-

gage conveyed to the Custom-house, and would superintend the examination of its contents.

At the door of the inn I was received by his wife, a smiling and well-dressed young woman, who conducted me into a small but comfortable apartment; and in less than five minutes I found myself quite at home, while half a dozen waiters busied themselves in anticipating my wishes. One stirred the fire, a second drew down the curtains, a third placed on the polished table a pair of wax candles, a fourth lighted them, a fifth brought a newspaper, and a sixth, on my inquiring about dinner, ran for a bill of fare.

"Well," thought I, "this England seems indeed a most delightful place, and a simple traveller is better treated here than an ambassador or reigning prince in other countries. Nor did I forget to contrast all these civilities with the cold and haughty manner in which you and I were so often received at similar houses in America. When the bill of fare, which was as long as *la carte* at a French *restaurateur's*, was produced, some of my miseries began.—It contained a list of every kind of butcher's meat, every kind of poultry, every kind of fish, and every kind of vegetable; but all these things were to dress, and nothing was ready, though the hour at which I arrived was precisely that at which I know the generality of Englishmen are in the habit of dining. The necessity of

waiting while my meal was preparing, did not very well accord with the ravenous appetite of a man who had not eaten since sun-rise, and who in the interval had crossed the Channel: but compelled to do so, I requested, without making any selection, that my landlady would have the goodness to order for me whatever could be most expeditiously cooked. No time was lost in executing my orders; but when, on being informed that the dinner was ready, I begged that the soup might be brought in, I found to my great disappointment, that that usual, and almost from habit necessary, article in a Frenchman's meal had been omitted. "Then," said I, "let me have what you have substituted." A slice of boiled cod with a very insipid sauce made of oysters (which I happen particularly to dislike) was followed by a plate of mutton chops, which were so hard and so raw that I could with difficulty persuade myself to taste them; and the potatoes, which filled another dish, were scarcely more inviting. I requested, therefore, to have some other vegetables, when some greens were placed on the table—but they, too, were underboiled. One of the waiters perceiving that I did not seem to relish the dinner which he had set before me, said very civilly, "Sir, would you choose something else?—Perhaps you would prefer a beef-steak, a veal cutlet, or a slice of cold ham?"

"Oh, no:—cannot I have a partridge—some pigeons—a *poulet au ris*—a *fricandeau*—or a *vol-au-vent?*" (mentioning some of the articles which in France are met with in the commonest inns.) His answer convinced me that nothing of the kind was here to be had without several hours previous notice. In despair I called for pastry; when an ill-made apple-tart and some tasteless jelly were brought in;—and when I asked for a dessert, a few oranges, a dry biscuit, and a dish of sour apples, were all that I could obtain. In respect to wine I was equally unfortunate: I first tried the Port, but it appeared so very strong to my palate, that I seemed to be swallowing liquid flames. I changed it for claret; the beverage thus denominated proved so adulterated, that I could scarcely recognise in its taste the most distant resemblance to my favourite Bordeaux. But, to conclude the tale of *mes petits malheurs*, my next demand was for coffee:—after I had waited half an hour, a silver salver was placed before me, containing an elegant vase of the same metal; and by its side a china dish, with a well buttered muffin, and a cut-glass jug full of the richest cream. All these preparations promised well; but when I began to pour out the coffee from the ornamental pot which held it, I found it so ill made, and so diluted with water, that it was not without disgust that I swallowed a cup-full.

Little refreshed by my dinner, and exhausted with the fatigues of the day, I expressed at an early hour my intention of retiring to rest: as soon as I told the waiter that such was my wish, a pretty and well dressed young woman, who said she was the chamber-maid, made her appearance, and, carrying a wax taper in a silver candlestick, led me through the intricate mazes of an old-fashioned stair-case, which seemed to run from one end of the house to the other, into a low-roofed room, where a small but neat bedstead with furniture of snowy-white linen, accompanied with every other apparent comfort, seemed to promise that if I had not dined very luxuriously, I should be indemnified by the enjoyment of a good night's repose: think then of my disappointment, when on lying down, instead of the pile of mattresses to which we are accustomed in France, I found nothing here but a *soft* feather-bed, the heat of which was intolerable; while the sheets had been so highly mangled, that I could not find a resting-place. After tossing about for several hours in a state of feverish irritation, I had at last sunk into an uneasy sleep, when I was suddenly roused by the sound of a horn, which announced, as I was informed the next day, the arrival of the London mail-coach. Again I attempted to tranquillize myself; and, after an interval of some time, fell once more into an imperfect slumber, when I was a second time

disturbed by a still louder noise than that which had at first awakened me: it was occasioned by some late travellers, who finding the gate of the inn closed, which was directly under my windows, were knocking at it, and demanding post-horses.

Such was my first night at an English inn; and such my experience of the comforts, the much vaunted comforts, of a country which in this respect is said to be superior to all the world.

You will acknowledge that, if during your first week in France you discovered some inconsistencies, before I had passed twenty-four hours in this island I had sufficient cause to make a similar complaint. My bill, too, for these wretched accommodations amounted to something more than two guineas; for which sum at Paris, after eating the most luxurious dinner at *Beauvillier's* or *Robert's*, you may sleep at any of the most expensive hotels in such a bed as a Roman emperor would not have disdained. Nor were the circumstances which I have mentioned peculiar to Dover:—wherever I stopped on the road, I found similar advantages and similar disadvantages. At every inn, I enjoyed on my arrival the comforts of a good fire and a well aired room; and in all of them the charm of extreme cleanliness, and great civility:—but when wishing to satisfy my appetite I called for the bill of fare, I uniformly received a long list of mutton, veal, beef, lamb,

poultry, and fish,—*to dress*; and I soon learnt, unless I was disposed to wait three or four hours for the preparation of a dinner, and to treble the already heavy charges of my travelling expenses, that the only real choice was between a tough mutton-chop and a hard beef-steak, between an ill-cooked veal cutlet and a half-roasted leg of mutton, and between stale pastry and insipid jelly.

Having thus spoken frankly of the inconveniencies which I have experienced, it gives me great pleasure to reverse the picture, and to speak to you of the satisfaction which my journey has already afforded me.

In going from Dover to London, I was delighted with the rapidity of the posting, the beauty of the horses, and the civility of the drivers—the excellence of the roads—the rich variety of the landscapes—the ornamented grounds and elegant villas of the gentry—the white cottages and neat gardens of the peasantry—the picturesque villages—the appearance of comfort so generally displayed in the dresses and dwellings of all orders of the people—and with the first sight of your renowned Thames, flowing majestically between the counties of Kent and Essex, and so crowded with vessels that I seemed to behold a forest of masts. I was also much surprised at the multitude of travellers, whom I met in private and public carriages of all descriptions. You are

indeed a wandering nation, *par éminence.* I am persuaded, that between Dover and London I saw twice as many persons as will be found at any time in the road between Paris and Geneva; though the latter journey is at least four times longer than the former.

As I approached London, I endeavoured to discover the dome of St. Paul's. It was at last pointed out to me, but it was so enveloped in a cloud of smoke that with difficulty I perceived its mighty cupola. In driving over Westminster-bridge, I lamented that a nearer view of the river was impeded by the lofty parapets; but what I did see excited my admiration. On entering the town, I confess I was disappointed. After traversing a shabby street formed almost entirely of shops, I perceived, it is true, a handsome opening to the left, the striking feature of which is the Abbey; but its ancient magnificence seems little to accord with the modern garden adjoining it, and still less with the low and petty buildings which we passed in approaching it. Evening was coming on at the moment of my arrival, and a dense and yellow fog threw a gloom on all around. The convenience, however, of your *trottoirs* (for which it is curious that *we*, who do not generally possess the advantage, have invented the only appropriate name,) did not escape my notice. On these *trottoirs* crowds of well-dressed pedestrians of both

sexes were hastening to their respective avocations, in spite of the unfavourable state of the atmosphere, and of the approaching night.—Nor did I fail to remark the numberless elegant carriages and loaded carts, which impeded our way when we came to Charing-Cross, while the richness and variety of the shops, which were just lighted, dazzled my eyes, and distracted my attention.

But more of all this hereafter. I have for the present taken up my quarters at Brunet's in Leicester-square; for though I hope, by and by, so to accustom myself to your usages as to feel perfectly at my ease in an English hotel, I think, for the moment, I shall be more satisfied at the house of a countryman, where I shall be able to command all those conveniencies which early habit has rendered indispensable. For my next letter I flatter myself I shall find a more interesting topic than that of inns and waiters, to which this has been necessarily confined. Adieu!

And believe me ever yours,

LE MARQUIS DE VERMONT.

LETTER III.

Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.

MY DEAR DE VERMONT,* *Paris.*

HAVING now completed my first *Quinzaine Angloise à Paris**, I proceed to give you an account of what I have seen and heard, with all the deliberate wisdom of an experienced traveller. I really have been whirled about with such rapidity from one kind of amusement to another, and have been offered pleasure in such a diversity of forms, that I feel quite bewildered, and know not how to arrange my thoughts, and still less how to communicate them.

I have, of course, visited the galleries of the Louvre—been presented to your good king—dined with our ambassador—lounged in the gardens of the Thuilleries—eaten ice at the *Café Hardi* on the Boulevard—had my pocket picked in the Palais Royal—admired Mademoiselle Mars at the Theatre François—seen the grand ballet at the Opera House—drank punch at the Café des mille Colonnes, and ogled the pretty and be-

* Alluding to a novel so called; in which the follies of an Englishman, committed during a fortnight's stay at Paris, are ridiculed.

dizened bar-maid—sported my cabriolet in the Bois de Boulogne—dined at *Robert's*—attended the sittings of the Corps Legislatif, and the gambling table of the too celebrated *Salon*; and, after losing some hundred pounds at the latter, have been consoled with an invitation to dine with M. le Marquis de L—— on Thursday next, who does the honours of a weekly banquet, the expenses of which are paid by your *virtuous* government, in order to support an establishment so calculated to improve the morals of the people. All these scenes are so well known to our countrymen, that, were I writing even to an Englishman, I should think it superfluous to describe them: it would be ridiculous to make the attempt in addressing myself to a native, who has so long been the *arbiter elegantiarum* of the French capital; I shall content myself, therefore, with one remark,—that wherever I go, I am astonished at the prevalence of gravity and silence where I expected nothing but gaiety and noise. In viewing the remaining treasures of the town, I meet crowds of Parisian amateurs contemplating these master-pieces of art with all the solemnity of professional critics; and without giving vent, by a single expression, to the admiration which these objects necessarily excite. At your theatrical performances of all sorts, no matter what the exhibition may be, whether it consist of the deepest tragedy or the

liveliest comedy or farce, pantomime or sentimental drama, not a word escapes the lips of the giddiest or most ignorant of the audience; and every body seems to listen with equal attention to the declamation of Talma, the nonsense of Punch, or the wit of Molière. At your public libraries and subscription reading-rooms, the same decorum is observed; and no person's studies are disturbed by the harangues of chattering politicians, such as you will find in every similar establishment of the English metropolis: and though, to be sure, there is no lack of conversation among your pedestrians in the gardens of the Palais Royal and the Thuilleries, silence again prevails at your gaming-tables; where, when the most excruciating feelings are depicted in the countenance of an unsuccessful speculator, if a *bête!* or a *diable!* is sometimes heard in a low whisper, it is soon checked; and the lips of the ill-fated loser, however convulsed with agony, are not allowed to express the sentiments by which they are tortured.

Even at your balls, the performers are too much occupied in recollecting the figures of the dance, and the company in examining their steps, to admit of much communication. It is difficult for the enamoured *cavalier* to find an opportunity of conveying a few words of admiration to his lovely partner, and scarcely a sound is heard in the fes-

tive hall, save and except the notes of the music, and the eternally repeated mandates of the ballet-master, while he vociferates "*Chassez à droite, chassez à gauche. La chaine Angloise,*" &c. &c. At the salas of your *restaurateurs* also I remark, to use the expression of one of your writers, "*que c'est une affaire bien sérieuse que le dîner;*" and I daily see twenty or thirty persons deeply occupied in the discharge of this important duty, scattered about at detached tables, and swallowing their meat in impenetrable silence. On these occasions, too, I observe, that though the voracious appetite of John Bull is the favourite theme of your satirists, and affords the subject of many a caricature now exhibited at his expense in your print-shops, I begin to suspect, from the examples constantly presented to my notice, that my friend John is by no means a greater feeder than his criticizing neighbour.

When I have no engagement, I usually dine at Beauvillier's in the Rue de Richelieu; and while I take my solitary repast, I derive no little amusement in observing those who are seated near me. Among these I have frequently remarked a gentleman whom, from his black cravat, large whiskers, and enormous cocked hat, I take for an officer, and, from the riband which he wears, for one of distinction. The individual in question usually

takes his station at a table adjoining mine, so that I am necessarily the witness of all his proceedings. After carefully fixing his napkin in the button-hole of his coat, he commences the labours of the day by swallowing an ample supply of raw oysters (the eating of which is, I find, considered here as a great provocative of appetite). With his oysters he consumes at least a pound of bread, and washes down the whole with a glass of Dantzic brandy. He then calls for "*la carte*;" and after having examined its long contents with due deliberation, he gives his written orders on a slip of paper to the waiter, to prevent the possibility of a mistake. While these orders are executing he seems to experience no trifling degree of impatience, at least I conclude so from the eager look with which his eyes are directed almost every minute to the elegant clock on the chimney-piece, besides several similar appeals to his watch. At length a basin of rich soup is placed before him, and by its side a bottle of champagne *de la première qualité* in a silver ice-pail. Having first taken his soup, and then three or four glasses of his favourite beverage, he commands the attendance of the *garçon*, who soon appears with the first *entrée*. The following dishes then succeed each other in proper order:—a large slice of *bouilli à la sauce piquante*—two *côtelettes à la minute*—*un*

fricandeau de veau aux épinards—a roasted fowl stuffed with truffles—various vegetables of different hues and kinds—a *vol-au-vent*—an *omelette*—an apricot tart, a *soufflé*, and a plate of pine-apple jelly. This *abstemious* dinner is followed by a dessert of equal *moderation*, consisting of *fromage de Gruyère*, grapes, pears, apples, comfits, chesnuts, dried cherries, *brioches*, cakes, and preserves. Nor are these various articles brought forward only to be *tasted*. My gallant neighbour is careful not to lose any part of the good things set before him. After eating the principal contents of each dish, he secures the remainder by dipping a piece of bread in the sauce or juice, which bread, when properly saturated, is swallowed in its turn. The intervals, which occur between the appearance of the different *entrées*, are filled up with copious draughts of the sparkling champagne; and when all the eatables are at last consumed, and the bottle exhausted to the last drop, he asks for a *tasse de café*, which is sweetened by at least six lumps of refined sugar, and followed by a glass of the richest *liqueur*. He then demands *la carte payante*,—settles his account, gives a few *sous* to *le garçon*, detaches his napkin, resumes his fierce cocked hat, bows *en passant* with becoming gallantry to the pretty bar-maid, and marches out of the room, apparently

well satisfied with the manner in which he has thus discharged one of the most agreeable parts of his daily functions.

This is a simple and unexaggerated account, not only of the mode in which this person usually dines, but also of the luxury and indulgence with which I constantly see several others of your countrymen take a similar meal.

Now, without pretending to deny that we have many persons in London equally fond of good eating, I must take the liberty of saying, that you will find it difficult to meet with an example of similar selfish gratification: something of sociability enters into the calculations of our most decided Epicure; and I should suspect that even a certain alderman (whose jollity is proverbial) would not relish his tureen of turtle, or his haunch of venison, if not shared and enlivened by the company of some brother *bon vivant.*

Go into our most fashionable coffee-houses, and you will see that our young men of rank and fashion, when they dine alone, are not only satisfied with much simpler fare than that which your Parisians of a corresponding class require, but also that the quantity of food commonly consumed by the former is infinitely less.

As I have yet seen but little of private society, I shall reserve my observations on that head till I

have had better opportunities of examining your manners. In the mean time I hope often to hear from you, and depend on your imitating my example, in speaking freely of all which draws your attention.

Adieu! and be assured of my constant regard.

C. DARNLEY.

LETTER IV.

The Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley.

MY DEAR DARNLEY, *London.*

BEFORE my arrival in this land of freedom, I imagined that here at least, in private as well as in public life, every man would be at liberty to follow his own inclinations as long as he infringed on no positive law. It never occurred to me, therefore, that on such unimportant topics as dress, and the division of time, a stranger would be called upon to alter any of his usual habits.

I have, however, already discovered, that while John Bull claims the privilege of making himself ridiculous in his own way abroad, he allows no similar indulgence to the foreigner in England.

At Paris, we are so accustomed to the whims and eccentricities of your countrymen, that a member of the four-in-hand club drives his *team* (as he pleases to call his mail coach and fiery greys) along the Boulevard or the Rue St. Honoré, without exciting any more attention than such an equipage would draw in Bond-street or Hyde-park: and one of your *exquisites*, or modern *petits maitres*, accoutred in all the effeminate absurdi-

ties of the prevailing fashion, is not more stared at in the Theatre Feydeau than he would be at Covent Garden or Drury Lane play-houses.

I find there is no reciprocity on these subjects, on which, on the contrary, the most tyrannical uniformity is exacted in London.

While paying a visit half an hour earlier than that which *almighty ton* has marked as appropriate to such duties, is a crime seldom pardoned —wearing a hat an inch too wide in the brim, a waistcoat too short, or a coat too long, subjects the unfortunate and unconscious foreigner to a suspicion of vulgarity quite sufficient to banish him from the elegant circles of this gay metropolis.

I have therefore begun my career by completely new modelling my *costume*, and for that purpose have put myself in the hands of the most celebrated *professors*. My hair has been cut by Blake, and my coat by Allen, my waistcoat and pantaloons come from the hands of other *artists* of equal celebrity, each devoted to the peculiar line of his *profession*. Lock is my hatter, and Hoby my shoe-maker; and as I am assured (to adopt the words of an elegant modern satirist*) that

> "All is unprofitable, flat,
> And stale, without a smart cravat

* Mr. Luttrell, in his "Letters to Julia," perhaps the most witty poem of the kind, which the English press has produced since the appearance of "The Bath Guide."

Muslined enough to hold its starch,
The last key-stone of fashion's arch,"

a kind English friend has taught me,

"By dint of hand and eye,
How to obtain a *perfect tie*."

Indeed, I am so metamorphosed that you would scarcely recognise me. I can now pass unquizzed through a crowd of *dandies;* and I had even, a few days since, the glory of overhearing one of the most renowned of these heroes express his approbation of the brilliant polish which my boots displayed.

In respect to hours, I was at first guilty of some most antediluvian mistakes, by knocking at the doors of those, to whom I had letters of introduction, at a *time* of the day when the only persons expected were the milkman, the baker, or the butcher. After having had my patience exhausted in waiting at several houses for admission, I found it was uniformly denied me, while many a yawning footman, as he answered my inquiries from the area, said his master would not be visible for at least four hours. I have therefore found it necessary on this point also to conform to your usages. Being, however, habitually an early riser, it was essential to my comfort that the mornings should not be thrown away, and I have found a delightful resource in devoting that portion of my time to the *sights* of London. In this manner I have already been enabled to visit St. Paul's,

the Tower, Westminster Abbey, and the British Museum without interfering with my other pursuits. By this arrangement (for which I have as a precedent the high authority of the Imperial Alexander) I vary and multiply my enjoyments, and take care never to appear in the purlieus of *haut ton* till, to use the phrase of one of your most celebrated *elegantes*, "the day is properly aired." Indeed it appears to me that the British capital is inhabited by two distinct classes of people, one of whom might take for its emblem the bee, and the other the drone. If at nine o'clock I go into your courts of law, I find the learned judges of the land attended by a numerous and respectable bar, and by juries, witnesses, and attorneys in the full exercise of their important functions. If I extend my walk to the city, I read in the anxious countenances and rapid paces of all I meet, the activity of men of business; while carriages and waggons of every description, loaded with merchandize, show that in this division of the town the value of time is *duly* appreciated; and if at the dawn of day I take an aquatic excursion on your beautiful Thames, I find it already enlivened by the animating sight of innumerable vessels in full sail, carrying the fruits of your industry to the most distant corners of the earth, or bringing home the wealth of the world. I often smile, and enjoy a moment of self-approbation, when, after

an interesting survey of this kind, which has busily filled up six or seven hours, I direct my steps to Bond-street, and find the fashionable morning just beginning.

It seems, that in the western part of London "*il ne fait pas jour*," as we say in France, till about three o'clock of the natural afternoon; and though from thence till seven or eight o'clock constitutes the whole period between breakfast and dinner, yet even that short interval is too long for the tedium of idleness. What vigilant ingenuity has been exercised in devising new methods of destroying time and resisting *ennui!* Yet what languor and apathy mark the features of the most celebrated votaries of pleasure! What sauntering indifference is displayed in the steps of the well-dressed pedestrians, who at the accustomed moment commence their daily pilgrimage from the top of Bond-street to the end of Pall Mall! Some stop at the fruit-shops, and, careless of consequences, run up a bill for early strawberries, forced peaches, and pine-apple ices, which becomes not unfrequently the cause of their ending their days within the walls of the King's Bench prison. Some empty their purses in bidding for useless baubles at the splendid auction-rooms of Phillips and Christie. Some are attracted by the grotesque prints exhibited at the windows of the caricature-sellers, and while staring at them pay

dearly for their amusement in losing their money and watches, which become the prey of surrounding pickpockets. Some are persuaded to try their fortune at the gaming-tables or billiard-rooms; and among the vast crowd of loungers, scarcely any can resist the varied temptations which shops of every possible kind hold out to the vanity or the wants of the passers by.

The ladies who occupy the splendid equipages which so thickly fill the same streets, at the same time, seem to be not much better amused than the humble loiterers on foot; and not less anxious than they to have recourse to every possible stimulus which novelty offers, no matter at what expense, to dissipate the gloom of unoccupied folly.

At the panoramas, bazaars, milliners', perfumers', and, above all, at the jewellers' shops, what strings of these carriages are seen, and how beautiful, yet how listless, do the women appear whom they contain! Hither they come, not to purchase necessaries or even ornaments wanted for any particular occasion, but in the vain hope, by lavishing money, to get rid of the load of *ennui*.

Indeed, I am told, this favourite recreation, which your ladies call *shopping*, is often the cause of serious injury to the fortunes of their husbands. And a gentleman, who resides here, tells me that he was under the necessity of laying down his carriage, because he ascertained, by dire experi-

ence, that while his wife possessed an equipage, she could not resist the inclination of showing it in Bond-street; and when there, she daily wasted such sums in the acquisition of trinkets and other costly play-things, as at the end of the year amounted to a much larger *total* than his whole income afforded.

I am conscious, however, that as a Frenchman I am not very patriotic in criticizing this habit of your English belles; for I am told that French China, French gowns, French pocket handkerchiefs, French *bijoux*, and, above all, French *rouge*, are the articles which form the principal allurements.

From five till seven o'clock a migration takes place, and I see the same well dressed crowds assembled in Hyde Park. Here I again admire the charms of the women, the beauty of the horses, and the multitude of elegant carriages: but while I confess that it is impossible for wealth and magnificence to make a prouder display, I must be permitted to remark, that I observe but few "merry faces;" that every body seems to come hither "to see and to be seen;" and that in performing a task enjoined by vanity and fashion, pleasure is rarely enjoyed.

Nor can I dismiss this part of my subject without expressing my surprise that, with the whole range of so fine a park at their command, the fre-

quenters of this favourite promenade confine themselves to the limited and ill-chosen space between Piccadilly and Cumberland gates, where they are subject not only to the smoke of the adjoining houses, but also to the annoyance of city fogs, whenever an easterly wind prevails; and in writing to an old inhabitant of London, I need not remind him how often that occurs.

For such inconveniencies, however, I suppose they think themselves indemnified by being drawn into a smaller circle; for I observe that crowds form so material an ingredient in an Englishman's ideas of enjoyment, that every opportunity is taken of collecting them. Nothing on this occasion has surprised me more, than to see ladies, as well as gentlemen, piloting their way on horseback between the close-drawn ranks of carriages which parade up and down.—Is it not strange that your wives and daughters should thus at once expose themselves to considerable risk, and make an exhibition so very inconsistent with that delicacy, which is generally believed to form one of the most amiable characteristics of English women? I am told, indeed, that the fashion is a new one, and that it is only within these few years that female equestrians of character have made their appearance in this cavalcade. If so, let us hope that it is only one of those accidental whims, in which the most faultless of the sex will

occasionally indulge; and that, after this season, the belles of Britain will disdain to enter the lists with coachmen and barouche-drivers.

Having presumed in this letter to censure freely where I thought censure deserved, I shall not conclude it without performing a more agreeable task, in telling you that, take it for all in all, I am delighted with London. The pleasing contrasts (as I have already had occasion to observe) presented in the two distinct characters and different habits of the commercial and idle parts of the population of this great city, afford a vast and amusing variety of objects.

Indeed, so many attractions present themselves, that my only difficulty consists in selecting between things equally interesting.—In my early excursions, I hesitate between a walk to Kensington Gardens, which, even when deserted, are delightful in fine weather, or a visit of curiosity to the Wet Docks, the British Museum, the Courts of Law, or the Exhibition at Somerset-House. When the protracted morning of fashion begins, I find it no less difficult to determine, whether I will join the gay promenaders in St. James's-street—spend two or three hours in examining the numberless treasures of some of your many interesting shops—or avail myself of that liberality, which has opened the splendid picture galleries of Lords Grosvenor and Stafford, and others, to the inspection of the pub-

lic; and when evening approaches, I am again puzzled (thanks to your friendly recommendations) between a number of invitations to dinners, balls, and other assemblies, all of which it is impossible to accept.—Of them I shall say nothing at present, my letter being already too long; but shall reserve my remarks on private society till my next. Adieu, then,

And believe me ever yours,

LE MARQUIS DE VERMONT.

LETTER V.

From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.

MY DEAR MARQUIS, *Paris.*

YOU have had the goodness to send me so many letters of recommendation, that since they arrived I have found my whole time nearly occupied in delivering them. On one of these occasions I met with so singular an adventure, that I cannot help relating it, as it is truly characteristic of national manners.

When I stopped at the splendid but dilapidated hotel, in a distant part of the Fauxbourg St. Germain, of the Duchesse de ———, (to whom you will recollect having written an introductory epistle in my favour,) I was informed that Her Grace was at home, and would receive me. I of course obeyed this summons, and delivered my credentials. She welcomed me with all that urbanity which your ladies of the old court know so well how to assume when they wish to please. She first spoke of you, and next of England, judging, very rightly, that my friend and my country were precisely the subjects on which I was most open to flattery.

I will not shock your modesty by repeating all the civil things which she expressed on the former of these topics. I shall content myself with observing, that she was most *laudatory*. Her commendations of Great Britain and its inhabitants were equally enthusiastic. We were the saviours of the world, the restorers of peace, good order, and religion, while of her own Government she spoke in very different terms. The poor King was mentioned with contemptuous pity, and said to be the dupe of *Jacobinical* ministers*, who were ruining both his affairs and those of the nation!

After this exordium, which disclosed to me her politics, the Duchess gave me a pathetic description of the sufferings to which she and the duke, in common with all other persons *comme il faut*, had been exposed during the too-well known events of the late Revolution. "While, at length," continued she, "we saw our legitimate sovereign restored, we naturally expected, not only that the property of which we had been robbed would be given back, but that we should be, in some degree, indemnified for our personal wrongs by peculiar marks of royal favour. Think, then, of our disappointment:—of several of our estates which at different times had been made the prey of the spoilers, (except this hotel, which having been made a public office during the usurpation happened not

* Written during the administration of M. de Cazes.

to be sold,) not one has been returned; and even what little fortune, during these tremendous times, chance or prudence had preserved, is not left at our own disposal; for, by a democratic law passed for the express purpose of destroying the importance of ancient families, parents are compelled to divide their lands, as well as their money, nearly equally among their children of both sexes."

After expressing herself in this manner with great energy, and shedding many tears, the Duchess proceeded to tell me, that for those who, like herself, were desirous of propping the falling honours of an illustrious house, but one means was left—that of restoring its wealth by advantageous marriages.

You will believe how much surprised I felt at having such a philippic addressed to me; she saw what was passing in my mind, and added,—"Have patience, and I will explain why I have taken the liberty of troubling you with these remarks.—Many French persons of exalted rank have set the example, under similar circumstances, of allowing their sons to give their hands '*à des riches héritières de votre pays*,'—even though of inferior pedigree, and not of the orthodox faith.

"The Duke and I, after many struggles (struggles which it was difficult for us to surmount, for

our families on both sides are yet *uncontaminated* by a single *mésalliance*), have at last resolved to adopt this painful remedy. I apply, therefore, to you, M. le Chevalier, for information on this important subject, and perhaps you will be glad of an opportunity of procuring for some female relative of your own, the advantages of becoming our daughter-in-law. You are sufficiently acquainted with the history of France to know, that there is not recorded in its annals a more illustrious name than that which my son will inherit; and, certainly, the wealthiest heiress of Great Britain would be much the gainer in an arrangement by which, in exchange for her riches, she obtained so proud a title."

She then recapitulated the list of archbishops, marshals, prime ministers, and cardinals, which her pedigree exhibited; and assured me that I should find it clearly proved by the same indisputable evidence, that the family derived its origin from the emperors of ancient Rome. I had some difficulty in listening to this heraldic harangue with becoming gravity, while she added, she had no doubt of receiving various applications as soon as her intentions were known. She mentioned the circumstance first to me, wishing, out of respect to you, to attend first to my recommendations. When at length she paused for a reply, I assured her how grateful I felt for this mark of

her attention, and that I regretted it would not be in my power to avail myself of her flattering preference, as I did not count among my relations any young lady possessed of the requisite qualifications. "*Mais cependant,*" (rejoined the Duchess with seeming surprise and disappointment,) "*on dit que vous êtes tous si riches en Angleterre; est-il possible que vous n'ayez pas une seule parente, jeune, jolie, et aimable, avec une dot de cent à cent cinquante livres sterlin? c'est tout ce que nous demandons.*" Retaining my gravity as well as I could, I repeated, that really no relation of mine possessed even half the very moderate sum at which Her Grace was pleased to value the hand of her son. "If you have no relations so circumstanced," continued the persevering Duchess, "have the goodness to name some lady of your acquaintance whom you think worthy of being placed on the list of *candidates.*"

Here my sincerity got the better of my prudence; and pressed in this manner I could not help answering, that I knew of no English girl, though enjoying a much smaller fortune than that which she had named, who, in spite of the temptations she held out, would consent to enter into a negotiation of this kind, and renounce the privilege, claimed and generally exercised by all my countrywomen, of choosing for themselves.

"Nonsense, nonsense!" exclaimed the Duchess,

interrupting me; "foolish girls may be indeed romantic enough to sacrifice all for love, but surely no sensible parent would undervalue such an opportunity of elevating a beloved daughter; and it is only with parents that I wish to treat."

I in vain tried to explain the difference of our manners from those of France, and the obstacles which opposed themselves to the realization of Her Grace's wishes.

Finding that I had neither relatives nor friends to recommend, she insisted on my giving her the names of such young ladies as were generally considered the richest heiresses of England.

To get rid of her importunity, I mentioned two or three individuals who, according to public fame, stood in this predicament; when, to my great surprise, the Duchess took from an adjoining shelf a memorandum-book, and recorded every particular of my information with the accuracy of a merchant; and while she complained of the difficulty of pronouncing, and the still greater difficulty of spelling, our barbarous names, inquired again and again the letters which composed them; and did not quit her task till each reported *héritière* was duly entered in her ledger with her appropriate appellation; adding thereto the part of Great Britain where she resided, the supposed amount of her fortune, and whether in land or money, in possession or reversion.

This ceremony occupied no inconsiderable time, and I in vain tried to save the Duchess so much useless trouble; assuring her that I only spoke from hearsay evidence, and that my information might, after all, prove very incorrect.

"*N'importe*," said she; "you have kindly given me some useful hints, it is my business to do the rest." She did not close the book till I had certified, by an exact examination, that the names were correctly written, and till she had again tried to draw from me some further materials for matrimonial speculation. Finding at length that I persisted in saying that my memory could go no further, she offered me a thousand thanks and apologies; and, after innumerable offers of services, allowed me to take my departure.

Though perhaps this letter is already too long, I cannot help, before I conclude it, relating a conversation which occurred on the same day at the table of our ambassador, where I happened to dine. Being seated near a lively English girl, I repeated to her my dialogue in the morning with the Duchess. "What you tell me," observed my fair neighbour, "was calculated to excite the surprise of an Englishman newly arrived at Paris; but had you inhabited this town as long as I have, you would have known that nothing is so common as this kind of hymeneal jobbing. On my *début* in this gay city, I was persecuted by the attentions of a

Marquis, who was by no means agreeable to me, but whom I did not immediately dismiss, because his egregious vanity and many other absurdities afforded me constant amusement; besides, too, I felt that I was in no danger of losing my heart to one whom I so thoroughly despised. This intercourse had existed some time, when, after one of those long visits, in performing a round of which a Parisian beau wastes at least two-thirds of every day, '*Dites-moi franchement*,' exclaimed my enamoured swain, *à combien estimez-vous votre dot?*' A little surprised at the unceremonious question, I determined to answer it in such a manner as would lead the inquirer into still further absurdities. I replied, therefore, that though it was rather contrary to *our* usages to disclose our pecuniary circumstances, I would candidly tell him, that being one of four children, my father had only left me 5000*l.*

"Only 5000*l.* sterling! *et une fois payés?*" exclaimed my calculating lover, "*qu'est-ce que cela fait en argent de France?*" and taking out his pocket-book, he sat down and counted the precise value at the current exchange. "*Diable!*" exclaimed he, after an arithmetical conference with himself of some minutes; "*cela ne fait pas plus que cent vingt cinq mille francs, bien comptés:*" then pocketing his memorandum-book, giving a senti-

mental sigh, and taking his hat, he assured me that he still preferred me to all the world, and if I had had the requisite fortune, he would not have hesitated to offer me his hand—"*mais avec vos* 5000*l*, *la chose n'est pas possible.*" So again sighing, and bowing profoundly, he flew out of the room with unruffled gaiety; and as I have never seen him since, my female vanity has been not a little piqued in being deprived of the opportunity of telling him that I was only laughing at him." I shall not apologize for repeating this little story; for whether it was literally true, or the ingenious invention of the clever girl from whose lips I ~~drew~~ it, I think it will make you smile. Fortune-hunters are certainly to be found in all countries, but marriage seems to be here made a regular traffic; and it is no disgrace to the most respectable individual to engage in this kind of speculation. Moralists, I believe, have not determined whether unions founded on prudential considerations, or dictated by the affections of the heart, conduce most to private happiness and public decorum. I am not so illiberal as to deny that many patterns of conjugal felicity may be found in France; but if examples of such felicity are rarer among you than among us, the question is practically decided. If the fact is contradicted, and we are to argue the question theoretically, I can only say with my

uncle Toby, that much may be said on both sides. Pardon the impertinent liberties which I have taken with your countrymen and countrywomen, and return the compliment by speaking as freely of all you see and hear in England.

Always yours,

C. DARNLEY.

LETTER VI.

From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley, Bart.

MY DEAR DARNLEY, *London.*

IN your last Letter you have drawn a very ridiculous picture of mygood friend the Duchess de ——; and though the likeness is not a flattering one, I must acknowledge the resemblance. I forgot to tell you, that, with a thousand good qualities, she is an enthusiast; and that her zeal in whatever she undertakes often leads her, with the best of all possible intentions, to commit the grossest absurdities. She has two children, a son and a daughter; and though fondly attached to both, so anxious is she at this moment to restore the fallen dignity of the family, that I am persuaded, did she possess the power of doing so, she would force the latter into a convent, in order to leave to the former, without any defalcation, the small remnant of the duke's once enormous fortune. As our laws not only deprive her of this resource, but have also entitled the brother and sister to nearly an equal distribution of the effects which she and her noble husband may leave behind them, all her thoughts are now directed to the acquisition of a

wealthy heiress for her son, in order that the riches of his wife may indemnify him for this lamented deduction.

Now, certainly, it is not very fair to accuse a whole nation of similar faults, on account of the extremes into which one individual may have fallen. Still I must acknowledge, that in spite of all the changes our institutions and manners have undergone during the last thirty years, *mariages de convenance*, that is to say, marriages contracted rather from prudential considerations than from those of affection, though rarer than they were before the Revolution, are still common among the higher classes of society. French parents, indeed, consider it their duty to seek out advantageous matches for their children, from whom, on such subjects, they conceive themselves entitled to implicit obedience. Whether, in doing so, they act wisely, and whether the experience of age is, or is not, a better guide than the ardour of youth, are questions which I shall not attempt to examine. But I must be permitted to make two observations:—first, That as your acquaintance becomes general in France, you will find innumerable instances of domestic happiness and moral propriety of conduct among persons who were brought together in this manner, and but few examples of such matrimonial broils and dissentions, as I am told are very common in

England; and, secondly, that though in this country heads of families do not meet and plan such arrangements for their children, neither parents nor young people seem by any means inattentive to worldly considerations, in forming similar connexions; and, in pursuit of this grand object, indelicacies and improprieties are daily committed.

It appears, indeed, most extraordinary to the eye of a foreigner accustomed to the extreme strictness with which unmarried females are treated on the Continent, to observe the much greater freedom which young ladies enjoy in this island, the manners of which are represented as so particularly correct.

In all the promenades and public exhibitions of London, I see the daughters of your most distinguished families escorted by crowds of single men; and though it is true that they never appear unattended by a matron, (styled here, I know not why, *chaperon*,) the latter, whether the party be on foot or on horseback, is frequently left by her younger companions at a convenient distance.

At your balls and assemblies I observe persons of opposite sexes, in the hey-day of life, seated in windows and corners of the room, deeply occupied with each other, and engaged in the most animated conversations. This kind of intercourse, which in other countries would be thought highly

indecorous, here passes uncensured in the most respectable circles, and is styled, in the jargon of fashion, an *innocent flirtation*. *A propos*, the said word *flirtation* cannot be translated into French by any corresponding term, probably because the habit which the phrase expresses, is unknown to us. On such occasions, I find that the most prudent mother thinks it quite unnecessary to interfere, provided always that the gentleman, whose assiduities the young lady appears to encourage, possesses what commercial men call *the one thing needful*,—I mean, a sufficiency of wealth; for character, temper, and corresponding tastes, are minor considerations, which seldom claim the attention of speculating parents. To ascertain the fortunes in possession, or expectancy, of the single men presented to them, becomes, therefore, the business of your female heads of families; and while the utmost pains are taken to draw the rich and noble into the vortex of their daughters' attractions, equal care is observed in keeping suitors of an opposite description at a respectful distance.

A handsome and lively youth, with whom I lately became acquainted, has amused me much with the history of his adventures in this town, where he only arrived from a distant county at the commencement of the present winter.

It seems, that having brought with him a few letters of recommendation to persons of respectability, he found himself treated with the most extraordinary kindness and unlooked-for distinction. His acquaintance was courted by the leaders of the fashionable world. Fathers invited him to dinners, and dowagers to balls, while their young and pretty daughters received his attentions with the utmost complacency. Indeed, civilities were lavished on him with so profuse a hand, that he found it impossible to accept half the invitations which he daily received. Surprised at making so brilliant an *entrée* into the circles of London society, he began to suspect, though a modest man, that he possessed, unknown to himself, some wonderful merits which hitherto had remained undiscovered,—when the scene was suddenly reversed: the warmth with which he had been every where welcomed, was succeeded by the most chilling formality: the list of engagements rapidly diminished; and the smiles, which lately lighted up the countenances of the fair when he addressed them, were converted into the most forbidding frowns. The cause of his present disgrace was as inexplicable as that of his early good fortune. A letter from the country at length unravelled the mystery. It appears he had a neighbour and a namesake, who, on coming of age, had lately taken possession of a very large estate, and on

that occasion had given some magnificent *fêtes*, a pompous account of which had for several days filled the columns of the London newspapers.

For this fortunate individual my friend had been mistaken; and it was to that circumstance he owed the favourable reception which he had experienced at the houses of the great. As soon as it was discovered that, instead of being the rich R—— of the county of ———, he was simply a law-student with a fair reputation and a moderate patrimony, he was no longer importuned by the donors of splendid entertainments, and was left to pursue his studies uninterrupted by the allurements of offered pleasure. Indeed, during the short time which I have already spent in England I have had many opportunities of remarking, how soon unmarried girls are taught to deal in matrimonial speculations.

The advantages which I derive from my knowledge of the English language (an advantage for which, my dear Darnley, I am indebted to your instructions and encouragement while we travelled together in America) not only enables me to partake of many pleasures in the town, of which other foreigners are insensible, but has also been the cause of my making some very extraordinary discoveries.

Frenchmen so seldom speak or understand En-

glish, that conversations are often carried on in my presence which were never intended to be overheard, and I am made the unwilling depository of important secrets. Thus, at a ball which I lately attended, having left the supper-table sooner than the other foreigners, I returned to the drawing-room, and finding the ladies seated in groups, I took a chair by the fire-side, when my attention was drawn from my own reflections to the following dialogue between a veteran dame of quality and her daughter, which, though conveyed in a suppressed tone of voice, I distinctly heard: —"I cannot express, Louisa," said the dowager countess, "how much you have provoked and disappointed me to-night." "What have I done, dearest Madam?" answered her pretty companion with some surprise.

Countess.—Why did you refuse to dance with Mr. Charles Mandeville, whom I had taken the greatest pains to get introduced to you?

Lady L.—Because I was engaged to Lord Randepole.

Countess.—Engaged!—nonsense.—That is justifying one fault by another. Have I not told you a thousand times, that when asked to dance, you should never give a positive answer? It is quite time enough to declare your intention when the quadrille begins; and however desirable the

first partner who offers you his hand may be, it is very foolish, by a precipitate acceptance, to throw away the chance of a better.

Lady L.—But how is such a question to be evaded?

Countess.—By saying that you have not yet made up your mind whether you shall dance:—that should you determine to do so, you are partly engaged; but when the music strikes up, if the tune please you, and the person to whom you had previously given a half promise should not claim its performance, you will comply with the request now made to you.

Lady L.—But why, my dear Madam, should I break my engagement with Lord Randepole, who is one of the most agreeable men in London, in order to please Mr. Mandeville, who is in every respect the reverse of his Lordship?

Countess.—For the best of all possible reasons: because Mr. Mandeville is in possession of ten thousand pounds a year, besides having still greater prospects; and this Lord Randepole is the son of an Irish earl, without sixpence.

Lady L.—Is it then necessary, by way of giving elasticity to his steps, that one's partner in a quadrille should have his pockets loaded with gold?

Countess.—Be so good, Louisa, not to be quite so flippant, and to recollect that no step which a young woman takes in life is unimportant; that

all her words, motions, and even looks, should be directed to one grand object,—that of getting comfortably and respectably married. You were therefore very wrong in treating Mr. Mandeville with so much indifference. Such a man is not to be had every day.

Lady L.—But would you really wish to see me the wife of Mr. Mandeville, who, besides being at least fifteen years older than myself, and one of the ugliest and most disagreeable men in England, is said to be also one of the most profligate?

Countess.—Splendid diamonds, an equipage, a house in Grosvenor-square, an ample settlement at present, and a ducal coronet in reversion, will soon reconcile you to Mr. Mandeville's age and ugliness; and if he is profligate, it will be your business to reform him. I hope you are not turning Methodist, and for a silly scruple of this kind disposed to reject such a prize.

Lady L.—I am no Methodist; but indeed, Madam, Mr. Mandeville is a prize which I am by no means desirous of gaining.

Countess.—You are quite intolerable; and if you continue to act and talk in this manner, I will send you down to your old aunt Deborah's manor-house in Wales, where you may undisturbed enjoy the retired pleasures of mending stockings and reading the family Bible.

So saying, the dowager walked off in sullen dignity, and left the warm-hearted girl to her own meditations.

On another occasion, I was at no great distance from a young couple who had for some minutes been engaged in rather an animated conversation, when the mother of the young lady entered the room, and drawing her away exclaimed in a loud whisper, "How can you be so absurd as to throw away your time in this manner? Don't you know that Mr. —— is only a *younger* brother? I must once again repeat what I have told you frequently before—never to allow any man to monopolize your attention till I have given the signal by holding up my fan."

I lately, too, received a lesson for my vanity I shall not easily forget: I danced at a ball with a very pretty girl, who, having visited the Continent and travelled even as far as Naples, possessed a fund of conversation very superior to that of the generality of unmarried females whom I meet in society. She received my attentions so favourably, that I ventured to hand her to supper, and to keep by her side during the remainder of the evening. In going away I was introduced to her parents, and was invited to their house, where I soon became a constant visitor. This intercourse had continued some days, when, calling one morning at our ambassador's, I learnt that a

near relation of the young lady, on the day after the ball, had made the most particular inquiries there respecting the extent of my fortune and the antiquity of my family. I found, too, that great anxiety had been expressed to ascertain whether I was the *identical* Marquis de Vermont who possessed the hotel in the *Rue Fauxbourg St. Honoré*, whose garden, opening in the *Champs Elysés*, had so often excited the admiration of the person who asked the question. In short, I found that the young lady and her family were fond of Paris, and that all the civility which they had bestowed on me, arose from a selfish speculation on the advantages of a possible matrimonial union with a rich inhabitant of their favourite city. Need I add, that after making this discovery, the sweetest smiles of the fair fortune-hunter could not induce me to repeat my visits?

While on this subject, will you permit me to observe that, in spite of the supposed reserve and diffidence of the females of this country, I perceive no backwardness when those who address them are the known possessors of large fortunes, or the immediate heirs of persons so circumstanced.

Wherever I go, I see mothers impatient to display the showy, useless, and often but imperfectly acquired accomplishments of their daughters. Equal anxiety is manifested to get them

seated, at dinner and supper parties, near those single men whose expectations are supposed to be the most promising; and when the manœuvres for carrying such arrangements into execution fail of success, I often see the prettiest faces disfigured by the expression of anger and disappointment.

Indeed, no greater contrast can be exhibited than that which may be traced in the countenance of a London *belle*, when she listens well pleased to the silly nonsense of a youth of fashion in possession of the requisite qualification, and when she is doomed to bear the annoying attentions of a *single quiz*, or *married bore*. In the one case she assumes a thousand smiles, and her behaviour is easy, polite, and almost too condescending. In the other her answers are cold, monosyllabic, and repulsive. In short, it seems to me that your young women come into society as into a market; and that every moment not so employed as to tend in some degree to their views, end, and aim, is considered both by them and their parents as lost and thrown away.

While, therefore, you blame French parents for entering into negotiations for the union of their children, you should recollect, that though such is not the habit of this country, here, too, interested considerations are not forgotten.

Perhaps, too, the open manner in which we transact these affairs in France is preferable and less indelicate than those secret schemes of match-making which are so common in England, and in which the youngest girls are often taught to play a part.

This letter is already too long, but I cannot conclude it without observing that both sexes are equally culpable in this respect. Among the subjects of conversation universally introduced at your tables after the departure of the ladies, I know no one more common than the fortune of reputed heiresses: nor is it at all unusual to hear young men on such occasions declare themselves willing to give their hands to women, no matter how old or ugly, provided they possess the means of gilding amply the matrimonial pill. Nor are such speeches merely made in the exuberance of spirits, for I have met with several instances of persons married to women old enough to be their mothers.

Think not, however, as you read these remarks, that I think ill of England, or feel disposed to caricature her manners: my sentiments and my intentions are quite the reverse.

The longer I live here, the more I find to admire; but when you attribute to national peculiarities those faults and foibles which, though met

with in France, are common to human nature, justice compels me to call your attention to similar imperfections found on this side of the Channel.

Pecuniary considerations must every where be the motive of many marriages; but I will candidly acknowledge, that, generally speaking, the inclinations of the heart seem to me more attended to in England than on the Continent, and the reason of this is obvious; you are the richest nation in the world, and have therefore less reason to allow the voice of love and nature to be stifled by the dictates of cold-hearted prudence.

Adieu.

LETTER VII.

From Sir Charles Darnley, Bart., to the Marquis de Vermont.

MY DEAR MARQUIS, *Paris.*

BY the assistance of your numerous and flattering recommendations, I begin to make my way in French society. I am very sensible of the obligations I owe you in this respect, for I find my countrymen are not very popular in this city; and, with the exception of a very small number of persons of exalted rank, who, by peculiar favour, are still admitted, the doors of the most respectable Parisians are shut against the English. Had I not, therefore, possessed such a *talisman* as the name of your friend bestows on me, I must have been satisfied in dividing my mornings between the gallery of the Louvre and the promenades of the Thuilleries and Bois de Boulogne; and my evenings between the theatres, the Palais Royal, and the gaming-houses. Such is the manner in which two-thirds of British travellers consume their time in this town; and such, and such only, are the opportunities they enjoy of examining your national character.

I, on the contrary, have been hospitably entertained at several houses; and, in becoming better acquainted with the customs of the country, have already reconciled myself to many which at first seemed either extraordinary or improper.—For instance: finding, in the commencement of my career, that only an hour was allotted to dinner (which I confess still appears to me too short a period for that meal, if conversation and not the mere gratification of the appetite, brings friends together on such occasions), and observing that your countrymen immediately after these hasty repasts hurried away to pay a round of visits, I began to suspect that the French were quite insensible of those pleasures from which we derive our best enjoyments,—I mean the charms of a domestic circle. In acquiring a more correct knowledge of your habits, I perceive my mistake, and acknowledge that the difference between the usages of the two nations in this respect is more in the name than the reality. Perhaps it is true, that it happens oftener to an Englishman than to a Frenchman to spend his evenings with his wife and children, without any company, and with only those amusements which conversation, books or music afford. But if the *soirées* of a Parisian are not exclusively devoted to the inmates of his family, he does not pass them with strangers. The visitors whom he receives, or the persons in call-

ing on whom he passes the hours after dinner, are generally either his near relations, or old and long-tried friends. He seldom stays by his own fire-side, unless it is enlivened by the presence of some one whom he sincerely loves; but when he goes from home, it is to enjoy the society of those who are endeared to him by the ties of blood, or by those of the tenderest attachment, and not, as is the case, too often, when we go into the world in London, to mix in heartless crowds of five hundred or a thousand persons, whom vanity and not affection brings together.

Indeed, the manner in which the claims of kindred and ancient friendship are attended to in this country, is highly honourable to the national character. Nothing, I am told, is more rare than a disagreement between parents and children. The remotest degrees of relationship are respectfully remembered; and the nearer ones are considered almost sacred. Indeed it is delightful, in the centre of a dissipated city, and in the highest circles of its society, to hear those who compose them addressing each other by the primitive but affectionate titles of father, mother, uncle, aunt, or cousin.—On the whole, therefore, I think it may be said with truth, that if a Frenchman goes oftener abroad than an Englishman, when abroad, the Frenchman is more at home. His wife and children may not occupy so much of his time, but

his parents and near relations see him much oftener. Hence, too, arises another amiable trait, which I have much pleasure in remarking,—I mean the general respect which is paid to age. Instead of persons advanced in life being neglected and rarely invited into company (which I fear are faults of commission and omission equally common in England), I find them admitted into all parties in France, and received with every testimony of marked and becoming respect. The youngest or most dissipated Parisian will offer his arm to a matron of seventy, if, in crossing the room, her tottering step betrays her need of such assistance; nor will his politeness cease till he has led her to an armed chair, drawn a footstool near her, and placed her work-bag on the table before her. Nor have I ever seen here such scenes as I fear you have too frequently occasion to remark at our balls in London,—I mean, two or three giddy girls leaning on the arm of their partners, and making their way to the supper-room in high glee and spirits, while their respectable mother, alone and unprotected, seems scarcely remembered, and is left to the mercy of a fashionable but still ill-mannered crowd. After making these concessions, which truth and justice demand, I must be permitted to remark another trait in your national character of a different description, which I was led to observe by being

accidentally present at a curious scene, which I shall now relate:

I must begin by telling you that I have learnt to conform myself to the usages of this country, and make a round of daily visits with all the regularity of a London physician. On one of these occasions, while paying my respects to your friend the *Comtesse de* ——, I found a large party assembled, and busily engaged in a conversation, which my arrival by no means interrupted; for you know, that in a Parisian circle every thing is openly discussed, whether it relates to the ingredients of a medicine, or the effects which that medicine has produced—to the choice of a court-dress, or to the arrangement of a wedding—to the hiring of a servant or of a house, or to some occurrence deeply affecting the fortunes or the affections of the parties. Well: I found that the present discussion related to a splendid gala, for which the Countess had sent out cards of invitation, and which is given in honour of the approaching nuptials of her lovely daughter with the *Marquis de* ——. Now the report of this intended gala having reached the ears of the young *Duchesse de* ——, she became extremely anxious to obtain a ticket, because, as the company invited were to assume, on that occasion, the costume of the reign of Henry the Fourth, she had the vanity to think that her person was particularly suited to the dress usu-

ally given in the pictures of those days to "*la belle Gabrielle.*" Not being known to the Countess, she applied to the *Chevalier de* ——, (who is the intimate friend of both ladies,) and he willingly undertook the task, which he was now endeavouring to execute. In answer to his request of an invitation for the Duchess, the Countess rather coldly answered, "that the entertainment was solely given to her intimate acquaintance, and that she had not the honour of perceiving the name of the Duchess in that list."

"On which list?" rejoined the Chevalier (who would not be deterred from his object.) "No person is more ambitious of appearing than her for whom I apply."

"The Duchess is very polite," said the lady of the house. "*Mais*"——

"*Mais* what?" interrupted the Chevalier; "you can have no objection to visit the Duchess; for, though beautiful, you know her character is irreproachable."

"Undoubtedly," answered the Countess; "and on any other occasion I should be proud to have the honour of being presented to the Duchess. *Mais*"——

"For Heaven's sake," again interrupting her, exclaimed the Chevalier, "give me no more of these chilling *mais*, but let us come to a proper understanding. I need not remind you, that with the

single exception of your own, the Duchess keeps the most agreeable house at Paris. Her weekly parties are delightful, and she authorizes me to say, that if you will gratify her in this particular instance, she will be happy to invite you and your fair daughter to these her regular *soirées*, and also to a masquerade which she is soon to give; and by way of obviating every difficulty on the score of ceremony, before the evening of your *fête* she will leave her card at your door."

The Chevalier had now touched the magic chord (for these weekly parties had long been the subject of many an anxious wish in the bosom of the Countess); her frigid word *mais* was no more repeated—every scruple vanished—the lady smiled—the ticket was signed, sealed, and delivered, and *M. Le Chevalier* hastened away to the expecting Duchess, not more pleased at having executed his commission than the Countess seemed to be at having made so profitable a bargain. Now, though there was no harm in all this, it disclosed a characteristic trait, and shows that such is the ardour of the French in the pursuit of pleasure, that even the proudest of them are disposed to make a sacrifice of every feeling of delicacy, when amusement offers its seductive bait.

Here, in spite of the unaltered prejudices of your *haute noblesse* against the very name of trade, two ladies of the highest rank were seen bartering

ball against ball with all the trading spirit and manœuvring adroitness which commercial men display when exchanging bales of cotton for hogsheads of claret, or loads of iron for cargoes of East or West Indian produce.

Adieu.

CHARLES DARNLEY.

LETTER VIII.

From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley, Bart.

MY DEAR DARNLEY, *London.*

IT gives me great pleasure to find, both from your own letters and from those of my correspondents, that you have already made yourself popular in those circles to which it has been my good fortune to be the accidental cause of first introducing you. My national vanity, too, is much gratified in drawing from you an acknowledgement, that if we have many foibles, we have still some virtues. In your last dispatch you show your discernment in observing, and your justice in admiring, the respect which is generally paid to age in France, and to all the ties of kindred attachment and ancient friendship.

As you lengthen your residence among us, and your knowledge of our habits increases, I flatter myself that you will discover other objects deserving your commendation; and I am persuaded, that in spite of the caricature drawn in one of your letters of the manner in which you suppose marriages to be contracted in France,

you will discover that examples of conjugal felicity are at least as common at Paris as in London.

With regard to the negotiation for an exchange of parties between two ladies, I shall only now observe, that if *our belles* make a trade of their amusements, I suspect, among the wives of the graver English, similar arrangements (though concealed, and managed with more art) are by no means rare. Perhaps I shall have occasion to revert to this subject hereafter, but for the present I have other topics to discuss.

If my letters have been of any use to you, the obligation has been amply repaid by the benefit which I have received from your recommendations in London. I have already received so many invitations to the hospitable tables of your friends, that I have had frequent opportunities of witnessing the manner in which the English associate together on these occasions. I have by accident visited at the houses of persons in very different situations of life, and probably of very different fortunes; and nothing has surprised me more, than to observe in all of them a similar character. I have dined in the families of merchants, lawyers, physicians, private gentlemen, privy-counsellors, and peers, without remarking any distinguishing circumstance which could have shown the class to which they respectively belonged. Every where I find a party of sixteen or eighteen

persons, who are ushered from the drawing-room tothe eating-parlour with heraldic precision, according to the rank which each individual is by law entitled to claim. Every where numerous tapers, held in lofty candelabra, or lamps in classical shapes, diffuse a brilliant light. Every where champagne sparkles in silver ice-pails, while innumerable other wines of the rarest kind and richest flavour are handed round in *troublesome* profusion.

Every where two copious services, with various removes, appear on dishes of embossed plate, or on those of the most beautiful china, and are followed by a dessert of equal magnificence. Every where the attendants are numerous and well dressed, and every where I remark that corresponding neatness and propriety which distinguish your establishments.

Now, though wealth is very generally diffused in this country, I cannot understand how all these persons, among whom such wealth must have fallen in very different proportions, contrive to live with equal splendour and expense. The only difference I can perceive is, that in some houses the dinner is better dressed than at others, and the servants more at home in the performance of their duty. In other respects, an almost tiresome uniformity prevails in the style of the entertainment. *À propos de la cuisine,* you must pardon

me for observing, that the desire of adopting not only the style of our eating, but also the names of *our* dishes, (which is so prevalent as to become almost a *rage*,) leads your ladies and gentlemen into as many mistakes in talking of them, as their cooks commit in the composition of these favourite articles. Thus, at one dinner I was asked to help the *bully beef*, at another I was offered a *cutlé* of mutton, and at a third I was assured the *raggoo* veal was excellent; yet the persons from whose lips fell these barbarisms were in other respects neither vulgar nor illiterate.

After acknowledging the expensive hospitality with which strangers are received in England, and the taste and elegance which the entertainments given by the higher ranks in this country display, I am sorry to say that my praises can go no further. The utmost care seems taken that each side of the table should present a corresponding number of *plats raisonnés*, that the *perigord* pie should be matched with the *vol-au-vent*, and the *cotelettes à la minute* with the *fricandeau*:—in short, that every dish should fill its appropriate station as exactly as a soldier takes his place on the parade.' But though such is the regularity observed in the arrangement of the festive board, very little consideration is paid to the selection and placing of the company invited to one of these costly banquets: I mean as to the re-

spective qualities and dispositions of those who *malgré eux* are made close neighbours for *three or four hours* at one of these protracted dinners. It is true, as I have already observed, that every body who has the slightest pretension to precedence is given the post of honour with all possible attention to his rank, and with very little regard to his wishes or inclinations;—but here ends the duty of the master of the house, and the rest of his friends are allowed, *pêle-mêle*, to range themselves as chance may direct.

It does indeed seem to me most extraordinary, that, at tables where such large sums are lavished in procuring every possible gratification for the *eye* and *appetite*, no regard should be paid to the mutual *taste* and *feelings* of the guests. I see every day the most glaring incongruities of this kind at houses, the owners of which would think themselves mortified and degraded, if their servants committed the slightest deviation from received usage in the arrangement of the various luxuries with which their table is loaded. Thus, I have remarked a beautiful and lively young girl seated between a superannuated beau and a prim doctor of divinity—a *blue-stocking belle*, with a giddy officer of the guards on one side and a fox-hunting squire on the other—a lady of the evangelical school next a professed libertine—a talkative and speculative widow near a married man (who was

also deaf)—and a violent oppositionist by the side of a peer in office. I have seen an author condemned to have for his neighbour the known writer of a critique, under the severity of which he was still smarting; and two Frenchmen placed side by side, who, though both emigrants to this country, were driven hither by the violence of their opposite opinions, the one for his unabated attachment to the fallen Napoleon, and the other for his ultra-zeal in the cause of legitimacy. In short, nothing can be more comical than the confusion produced by such ill-assorted parties, and I have sometimes been half tempted to suspect that the giver of the *fête* had amused himself in bringing together the persons least suited to each other.

The natural consequence of the little attention paid to the selection of the company is, that at these great dinners there is but little conversation, and except for professed gluttons no real enjoyment. Indeed, I find that while the ladies remain at table, a certain number of common-place questions are so often repeated, in lieu of the sensible remarks which I expected from the well informed English, that I am no less tired of hearing them re-echoed, than of receiving the circular visits of the servants, who plague one almost every five minutes with the offer of some fresh kind of be-

verage. The interrogations I allude to are, with little variation, as follow:—

Will you do me the honour of taking a glass of wine with me? Do you prefer Sauterne or Hermitage, Champagne or Hock? Were you at the Opera last night? What do you think of the new ballet? What news have you from Paris? Do you like England? Are you going to Lady Bell Barebone's *quadrille*, or Lady Lappet's "*At Home?*"

When the moment arrives at which, according to your ungallant customs, the female part of the company disappears, those who remain become, I am ashamed to say so, more at their ease, and less disposed to formality. I must confess that I have never yet witnessed one of those Bacchanalian scenes, the dread of which formerly made a journey to this country appear an object of horror to the mind of a Frenchman. Still it seems strange that the absence of that sex, whose presence every where is the signal of pleasure, should here act as a charm in unbending the heart of John Bull. But though on these occasions your countrymen throw aside their gravity, they do not become either more entertaining or more decorous, and I have often heard a kind of conversation at the best tables, such as in France would only be tolerated at the mess of a garrison town, or among professed

debauchees in their moments of secret and vicious indulgence.

An English gentleman, free from all prejudices, who has often given me very valuable information, and to whom I have remarked, as I have done in this letter to you, how generally magnificent and generally dull I find the dinners at London, assures me that the one characteristic is occasioned by the other. He says that expensive entertainments are given by many who can but ill afford them: and as the grand object (next to making a *display*, and assuming the appearance of men of wealth and importance) is to *repay* the entertainments of which they have already partaken, and to challenge similar invitations from those whom they are ambitious of visiting, they crowd together as many guests as possible, selecting them, not according to their social qualities, but as policy or vanity dictates, after examining the *ledger account* in which they regularly enter their parties, past, expected, and to come.

Indeed my informant goes further, and pretends that *first-* and *second-hand dinners* are quite common in London, that is to say, two feasts are given in the same week. To the first, all the highest titled and wealthiest of the donor's acquaintance are exclusively invited; and to the second, (which is simply a hash of the former repast,) his poorer

and more distant connexions and country cousins, mixed up, perhaps, with some needy Scotch lords, or minor members of the *corps diplomatique*, who are reserved for the inferior banquet, in order to excite the wonder and respect of the rest of the company. My friend has described one of these scenes in some lines which I believe appeared two years ago in your newspapers, but which, with his permission, I shall now venture to transcribe:—

If with limited means you would make a display,
Come listen to me, and I'll show you the way;
Pick acquaintance with persons of fashion and state,
I mean such *as are*, or who *think themselves* great;
For our folks of distinction, high rank, and high birth,
Mix strangely with some of the basest on earth;
And those counterfeit great ones pass current, I'm told,
Just as pieces of paper *were* taken for gold.—
Hire a house in the purlieus of *Ton*, and take care
That it stands in a street near some *smart-sounding* square,
Such as *Hanover*, *Grosvenor*, or *Portman* at least;
Then make your arrangements for giving a feast.
Of your room and your table first measure the feet,
To see if a score of these *Dons* you can seat,
Wedged together like slaves in a ship,—for you know
The object you aim at's not *comfort*, but *show*:
Next, send out your cards, and remember *their size*
Is a thing which by no means you ought to despise;
For a large printed card, like a thundering knock,
Announces a person of no vulgar stock;
And after inviting lords, *dandies*, and wits,
With some belles, and a few of the feed-giving cits,
Let your board, deck'd by *cuisinier françois*, display,
As per contract agreed on, *des plats raisonnés*;

And so having made on that day a great *dash*,
You may ask your old friends on the next to a hash;
For these Frenchmen a plan economic pursue,
And out of *one* dinner contrive to pinch *two*.
To be sure, it may happen that things may go wrong;
That the fish may be stale, or the soup not too strong;
That the sauces prove sour, and the creams rather acid:
But keep your own secret, dear Sir, and be placid;
Your second-hand guests (form'd of quizzes who dine
At home on boil'd chickens, roast beef, or cold chine,)
In spite of wry faces will cram, and suppose
That all faults, are the faults of their taste or their nose.
And if the next morning their stomachs should rue
The honour allow'd them of feasting with you,
They 'll think it a tax, though discover'd too late,
Which the *little* must pay when they mix with the *great*.

After saying so much above respecting the dinner-parties of London, I must add a few words on the assemblies with which they are generally concluded. Here again, as a Frenchman, I shall appear ungrateful, when I complain of the old English country-dance having been abandoned for one which you now call the *quadrille*, but which formerly, in your rage for foreign misnames, you used to style the *cotillon*, a word in French which expresses nothing but an *under-petticoat*, in which sense it is used in one of our most ancient ballads. Well, it appears to me that the good people of this town have since the peace been seized with a *dansomania Gallica*. Within the extensive limits of this overgrown metropolis, whenever persons of both sexes meet, no matter of whom the

company consists, a *quadrille* must be got up; and in adjourning from the dining- to the drawing-room, at all the houses which I frequent, I am sure to find an exhibition of this sort already begun—or the lady of the mansion using all her influence with the young men, to offer their hands in this dance to some of the many anxiously expecting damsels who crowd her party.

Though nothing can be prettier than the *quadrille*, when correctly and gracefully danced, it is so difficult to attain any thing like perfection in the performance, that even at Paris none make the attempt but the youngest of our beaux and belles; and those who do so devote half their mornings to previous rehearsals. Is it surprising, then, that in England it is rarely well executed? Indeed nothing can be more absurd to the eye of a Frenchman, than to see eight or at most sixteen persons of different ages and figures monopolizing the attention of a numerous assembly, while some unfortunate girl, disappointed of a partner, plays, unwillingly, the part of the musician at the piano-forte. On such occasions, it seems to me that this fashion has the happy effect of making a small number of individuals ridiculous, and condemning every body else to waste their evenings in apathy and ill-humour. But before I conclude, I must beg you to understand, that in venturing to tell you how little

pleased I am with the ostentatious entertainments which I have attempted to describe, I am far from wishing to insinuate, that real hospitality is effaced from the list of your virtues; for though, certainly, a plain dinner has now become as rare in London as a plain coat was formerly at Paris, I have at many sumptuous banquets been received with the utmost cordiality and unaffected kindness.—And though at the generality of houses there is more taste displayed in the choice of the dishes than in that of the company, there are not a few where the selection of persons of corresponding dispositions is never neglected, and it is in such parties that my happiest days are spent.

Farewell.

DE VERMONT.

LETTER IX.

From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.

Paris.

MY DEAR MARQUIS,

IN your last letter, you have criticized somewhat severely the dinner and quadrille parties of London, not to speak of your comments on the matrimonial speculations of our *mammas and misses*. I am about to make a generous return by giving you an account of an entertainment at Paris, of which I can only speak in terms of unqualified praise. You have no doubt heard, that *bals costumés*, or, in other words, balls at which the company appear in fancy dresses, though not in masks, have been much the fashion during the present winter in the French capital.

Madame de —— (who you know is celebrated for contriving new methods of enlivening her house) determined that the juvenile branches of her acquaintance should partake of a diversion which appeared to be so popular among their elders. She accordingly issued cards for a "*bal costumé, donné aux enfans de ses amis.*" This lady, who, by similar attractions, possesses the talent of drawing into her circle the most distinguished inhabitants

as well as visitors of Paris, collected on this occasion, besides almost every French person and foreigner of renown, eighty of their children; and no expense had been spared either in the dresses of these youthful exhibitors or in the pleasures prepared for them. The whole entertainment was more novel, more gay, and more characteristic than any thing of the kind which I have yet witnessed. In a large and elegant saloon, brilliantly lighted and decked out on the occasion with every possible additional ornament, accompanied by their respective parents (who were still in the full enjoyment of manly vigour, or the bloom of female beauty), appeared the destined representatives of some of your most illustrious houses, each of whom personated an assumed character, and wore an appropriate garb. A lovely Duchess held in her arms a little girl scarcely six months old, who was clad in the full attire of a superannuated lady of the last century, with a fly cap, long ruffles, stiff stays, and green spectacles. Besides an infant Hercules, a *baby* Alexander, and a *pygmy* Achilles, we had *Presidents à mortier* of the parliament of Paris, who (though the eldest was not more than eight years of age) preserved the full appearance of gravity becoming the robes of magisterial office.

We had smart little *Abbés* scarcely three feet high, who aped not unsuccessfully the effeminate

manners and pert loquacity of those once well-known members of French society. We had Monks whose pillowed rotundity reminded us of the jolly friars of former days. We had miniature *dames présentées de l'ancien régime*, with trains two thirds longer than the persons of the wearers, high *toupees*, high feathers, long lappets, powdered heads, and brilliant jewels. We had also *Maréchaux de France*, both of the old and new school; Cardinals, Statesmen, Legislators, Financiers, Merchants, Peasants, Turks, Jews, running footmen, flower-girls, *savants et savantes*, all correctly dressed and correctly acted, though very few of the exhibitors had reached their tenth birth-day. But the most striking feature of the whole evening was the performance of a *real quadrille* (such as the courtiers of Louis XIV. were in the habit of dancing) by a party of youthful masqueraders correctly dressed after the best pictures of that age.

Before they made their appearance, papers, of which the following is a literal copy, were distributed among the company, in order to prepare them for the coming sight:

Quadrille dansé le 8 Avril, 1660,

à l'Hotel de Rambouillet.

Quatre pages.

Picquet.	Pornsinet.
Tartarin.	Ogier.

Seigneurs.	*Dames.*
M. le Duc de la Rochefoucauld.	Mde. la Duchesse de Longueville.
M. le Duc de Lauzun.	Mademoiselle de Montpensier.
M. le Maréchal d'Hocquincourt.	Mde. la Duchesse de Montbazon.
M. le Comte de Bussy Rabutin.	Mde. la Marquise de Sevigné.
Maitre de Ballet.	Marcel.
Compositeurs de la Musique.	Lully, Rameau, etc.

While these bills were dispersing about the room, a well-chosen band of musicians (also dressed in character) struck up the tune of an ancient march,—when, preceded by their pages, the four boys who represented the four *Seigneurs* made their appearance, accoutred in long and laced coats, black wigs with long ringlets which fell down their shoulders, stockings with red clocks which were tied above the knee, and hats *à la Henri IV.* They moved forward from an adjoining room with becoming solemnity, each giving his hand to his allotted partner. The young ladies, who played the parts of the celebrated women already named, were no less appropriately dressed. They wore gowns with long waists, powdered hair, rouged cheeks, high heels, &c. Proceeding forward in measured time, the youthful dancers took their places in the centre of the saloon. The pages now with bended knee approached their respective lords, received their swords, and then after several bows retired. The *Seigneurs* began their task by making a profound

reverence to the company assembled, and then repeated the same compliment to their partners individually.

The music now changed to the air appropriate to the quadrille, which was admirably executed, with its ancient figure and ancient steps; nor did the exhibitors lay aside for one minute the gravity which they had been taught to assume.

While the performance was going forward, I could not help casting an eye on the brilliant circle of spectators which was formed round the dancers; and in those who composed it I recognised more than one immediate descendant of those illustrious visitors to the Hotel de Rambouillet, whom we now saw before us as in miniature; and this circumstance added no trifling interest to the scene which was representing.

When the dance was finished, the music changed to a march; the pages came forward and returned the swords, in a submissive attitude similar to that in which they had received them, to their respective *Seigneurs;* who, after renewing their bows to the company and their partners, gave the latter their hands, and conducted them out of the room with the same solemnity which they had observed on entering it.

I must now mention as a curious instance of national character early acquired, (for certainly *you* are the *best* actors in the world,) that these

young people, on being called upon to repeat the whole of this exhibition at the request of an illustrious stranger who came too late to see the first performance, achieved with equal propriety the second task required from them, and without losing for a moment that self-possession and command of countenance which had already excited so much applause.

I should mention, before I conclude this imperfect sketch of a most amusing evening, that at ten o'clock the eighty children who had appeared *en costume* adjourned to the eating-room, where a splendid repast had been prepared for them.

I was very much pleased with the politeness of the little Frenchmen, who, instead of rushing forward as so many English boys would have done, selected their favourite belles, and led them to the supper-table.

Nor did they forget to put their napkins through their button-holes; in doing which they reminded me of my friend the *bon-vivant* at Beauvillier's, who never begins his meal till this ceremony is performed.

Here, however, their regard for good manners seemed to cease; for no *roturier's* sons could have eaten more ravenously than did these children of *la haute Noblesse*. They were waited on by their *bonnes* (or nurses), who wore their provincial dresses, which added another curious feature to

the scene. I smiled at remarking that not a few Marshals of France, Cardinals, and Presidents of Parliament, received a friendly hint from these good women, not to make themselves sick by eating too much; a piece of advice which seemed to be but little attended to.

Among the many circumstances which threw a charm round this gala, I must add that the mothers of the juvenile exhibitors were still young themselves, and contained in their number some of the handsomest women at Paris. Their beauty, animated by viewing the performances and merry faces of their children, was seen to great advantage; but I must do them the justice to say, that I believe they were all too much occupied at this moment with the charms of their offspring, to think of their own.

Altogether, few things I have seen in France have pleased me more than this little *fête*; for it displayed at once a union of innocence, gaiety, and maternal affection. Farewell.

LETTER X.

From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley, Bart.

London.

I FEAR, my dear Darnley, that you will think me very ill-natured; but, having promised to give my opinion candidly and without disguise, I must confess that I am every day more and more surprised at the contradictions which I discover in the character of your countrymen. They have the reputation of being fond of retirement, yet they are for ever in public. They are said to be simple in their habits; yet their establishments, their equipages, their tables, their plate, and their jewels, display the most ruinous contempt of prudential considerations. They boast of the advantages they enjoy of living under a government of law and liberty; yet, when a disposition is displayed by other countries to struggle for similar blessings, they support and justify their oppressors. They cultivate literature more than all the nations of Europe, and I believe the books published yearly in London greatly exceed the aggregate number of those which issue from the united presses of the rest of the civilized world;

and, certainly, information is no where more generally diffused; yet science and letters are very rarely made the subjects of conversation. The English are the liberal patrons and professed admirers of musical talent, and at an immense expense tempt to their shores the most celebrated performers of Italy; yet neither at the Opera House, nor at public or private concerts, is it possible to enforce that necessary silence, without which the charms of soft sounds cannot be enjoyed. Your ladies are said to be domestic; yet, as I have had occasion before to observe, they waste their mornings in the lounges of Hyde Park or Bond-Street, and their nights in crowded assemblies, where the youngest and most beautiful of them, after exhibiting their only half-veiled persons to the gaze of five hundred spectators in the quadrille or less delicate waltz, seem to feel no sense of impropriety in seating themselves with their partners in some distant corner of the room, far removed from the eye of their husbands or mothers, where, without a blush, they listen to all the silly nonsense which passion or folly whispers, and vanity and inexperience so greedily devour.

You are strict moralists, and severely condemn *our* Government for checking some of the evils of gaming, by taking it under its direction; and, as vice cannot be avoided in a great city, for making it at Paris available to beneficial purposes, in ap-

plying the profits of the *Salon* and other similar establishments to the support of our hospitals and houses of relief for suffering poverty. Yet your Parliament yearly sanctions the drawing of a Lottery—of all kinds of gaming decidedly the most pernicious, and one by which the lowest orders of society are lured to their ruin by an irresistible bait. In spite, too, of the pretended strictness of your manners, the most abandoned women are allowed to throng your streets, and to fill the lobbies and upper boxes of your national theatres.

You are a religious nation, and particularly rigid in the rules you lay down for the observance of the Sabbath. Indeed, I have often heard Englishmen complain of the little respect paid to that day at Paris, though the amusements which *you* condemn, and which *we* think innocent, are not suffered to commence till after the hour at which the churches are closed. Well—in spite of all the extreme severity of opinion, I remark many contradictions in your manner of "keeping holy the seventh day." Your play-houses and shops are shut, but your eating-houses of all descriptions are thrown open. It is the day in the week chosen preferably to all others for country excursions; and those who remain in town loiter away several hours on foot, on horseback, or in carriages, while the evening service is still performing at no great distance from the promenade in which

they take their exercise; and while you hold it criminal to ask your friends to card parties or balls, Lords, Ministers, Judges, and Bishops, give dinners on Sundays; and at those dinners, I believe there is no less wine drunk by the gentlemen, and no less scandal spoken by the ladies.

But of all your contradictions, it appears to me that the greatest is that deference (I am almost disposed to say *homage*) which is paid to *rank* in this country. The writers on the British Constitution boast, and boast with reason, that all Englishmen are equal in the eyes of the law, and that though your Peers have sundry privileges, these privileges are less beneficial to themselves than to the public; that *they*, constituting your only real nobility, are not a *caste* or exclusive order—marked and separated from the rest of the people by an insuperable barrier; that most of them before they became Peers were Commoners, while their children during their parents' life-time have no legal superiority over the rest of their fellow-subjects. Well—in spite of these assertions, which are certainly founded on truth, I know no country in which the hierarchy of rank is so rigidly observed.

I should a few years since have attributed this circumstance to the value set every where on that which is *rare*. But when we consider the vast number of Peers created by George the Third,

and more particularly under the administration of Mr. Pitt—when we recollect the vast augmentation which the Order of the Bath lately received, and the *countless* Knights and Baronets whom the military and naval achievements of the last war have been the occasion of decorating with titles, it can no longer be said that lofty names are scarce even in England. Indeed, I never go into company without being jostled by numerous Englishmen bearing some of such courtly denominations, or decked out in one or more of the badges of distinction which mark the members of a chivalrous order. Besides these, also, there are abundance of foreign *noblesse*, who, in the respect paid them here, receive the full value of the exchange for their continental honours.

A propos.—When I first arrived in England, finding myself frequently placed next the lady of the house at the tables where I dined, I attributed this politeness to the general urbanity of your countrymen towards strangers, and was far from suspecting, what I have since discovered, that I owe all this distinction to the *title* which I happen to bear.

I believe you are sufficiently acquainted with our manners, to know that a man's importance (even according to the etiquette of the old court) depends principally on the antiquity of his family, and that members of noble houses are indiscrimi-

nately called *Marquis, Comtes, Vicomtes, Barons,* or *Chevaliers,* without the difference of appellation producing any in their rank. It is, however, to the accidental circumstance of my possessing the first of these denominations that I am indebted for the precedence so undeservedly bestowed.

M. le Marquis is translated into the English *Lord Marquis,* and treated as such. I am given every where the *pas* after Dukes; and indeed I often blush at being received in this manner, while perhaps a countryman of mine, over whom I have no pretension to arrogate the slightest superiority, is placed at the bottom of the table, because his title of "*Chevalier*" is considered only tantamount to that of a simple Knight. Nothing has surprised me more altogether than observing, in a country celebrated for the liberality of its institutions, so servile an attention to distinctions of this kind. To collect together as many great people as possible, seems the ambition of the donor of an entertainment, while little attention is paid to the moral character, talents, or acquirements of the company. I before told you how extraordinary it appeared to me, when I was first invited to an English table, to see the guests marshalled to their places according to the strictest etiquette of heraldic precedence; but, in my experience of your customs and usages, I find that the gratifica-

tion of vanity, and not the enjoyment of society, is the object of all such meetings; and as at Paris we try to form a circle of friends or of persons of congenial habits, so in London your aim is, to give yourselves a borrowed importance by the stars and titles of your guests. Indeed, though well acquainted with your language, it was long before I understood the jargon of fashionable life. When I was told that at a house at which I was about to visit, I should find "a *delightful party*," I expected to meet ladies of graceful manners or extraordinary beauty, and men of sense, wit, and information. Think then of my disappointment, when, on going to one of these promised delightful parties, I found the following company:—three or four Dowagers long past the meridian of life, and more remarkable for their contempt of all that is estimable in the female character, than for any of those qualities which throw a charm round the presence of truly amiable and agreeable women; half a dozen Lords, who could talk of nothing but their horses, their dogs, or their amours, except when the flavour of the wines, or the excellence of the sauces, claimed the admiration of their epicurean taste; an Earl's younger son, much taken notice of at *this time*, he having lately paid considerable damages for *crim. con.* with the wife of his most intimate friend; another "*Honourable*," who, after ruining a host of

tradesmen (while he indulged in the most wanton extravagancies), had just been discharged from the King's Bench Prison under the Insolvent Debtors' Act; and a *dashing* Baronet lately deprived of his commission for having cheated a brother officer of a considerable sum at the gaming-table; and lastly, of a comic actor from one of the theatres, who, knowing the price which he was expected to pay for his dinner, endeavoured by the grossest buffoonery to raise the drooping spirits of the high-titled, but very unprincipled and very tiresome, personages who composed this "*delightful party.*"

I make a similar remark respecting those motley crowds in which you pass your *nights*, rather than your *evenings*. When invited to one of these entertainments, after wasting a considerable time in approaching the door of the house in which the assembly is given, at no little risk to the safety of my carriage, and with some to that of my person, when I at last make my way into this much-talked-of gala, what do I find? A mob of six or seven hundred persons, all complaining of the heat, and seeming no less anxious to get away than they were a few minutes before to arrive: yet I am assured that this is a particularly select and elegant party; and when I venture to ask in what its merits consist, I am shown two or three cabinet ministers, several members of the *corps diploma-*

tique, various Peers and Peeresses, and in their train, some of the minor stars of the fashionable hemisphere, with the addition, perhaps, of a renowned English or foreign hero, an abdicated sovereign, an Otaheite chieftain, *a popular preacher*, a Persian envoy, a Greek celebrated for the tie of his turban, a learned lady for the brilliancy of her wit, or a traveller for his recent discoveries: in short, something extraordinary must be found, some object (no matter what) to which the eye of curiosity is at that moment directed; for rank has but one rival in England, and that is novelty; and the giver of a *fête* seems to think that but three things are necessary to ensure its success,—I mean, lords, ladies, and *lions*.

When, after having wasted a night at one of these parties, I read the description of it in the newspapers of the following morning, I smile at seeing it decked out in all the colours of high-flown panegyric.

When I come, however, to examine the particulars of the narration, I find the editor of the journal appears to think, with the donor of the establishment, that the charm of such a meeting consists in the *titles* of the company who compose it: after a few laudatory terms about the taste of the lady, whose festivities he is describing, and the *nouvel* style in which her house was decorated on the occasion, (for some French word, however insignificant, must be used,) the rest of

his column is filled with a dull catalogue of exalted names, beginning with those of Royal personages, and descending through all the intermediate degrees to Knights and *Knightesses;* to which is added a short (and only a *very short*) list of simple *Misters* and *Mistresses.* Indeed, the indecent custom of publishing an account of private assemblies seems to be one of the causes of the absurdity of which I complain; as, in order to supply materials for a pompous paragraph, every nerve is strained, and every scruple of becoming pride is silenced, to congregate, no matter by what means, the greatest possible quantity of grandeur and notoriety.

In short, it appears to me, so great is the reverence paid to rank, that such as possess that advantage, however deficient in mental or moral qualifications, are in little danger of being banished from the highest circles of London, unless the most egregious crimes are *proved* against them on clear and indisputable evidence; while persons not so distinguished, though eminent for virtue, talent, knowledge, and even ancient birth, may pass their time most dully in this nominally gay city; particularly if too proud and too independent to propitiate by presents and servile adulation, the very noble, but very vicious, leaders of the fashionable world. Adieu!

DE VERMONT.

LETTER XI.

From Sir Charles Darnley, Bart., to the Marquis de Vermont.

MY DEAR DE VERMONT, *Paris.*

IN your last Letter you complain so heavily of the inconsistencies which you have remarked in our national character, and you express so much wonder at the discovery, that I suspect you went to England with most exaggerated and mistaken ideas of our *perfectibility*. I fear we have no pretensions to the reputation of being free from the common failings of humanity; yet I think that the longer you reside in Great Britain, the more you will be convinced that no country ever attained so high a degree of civilization with morals so little corrupted.

Vanity is so potent a stimulus, that you rightly attribute to its dictates the excessive homage paid to rank in the private societies of London. Lords, dukes, and even princes, are really not more respected than the rest of their fellow subjects; and in the numberless journals, pamphlets, and other publications which issue daily from the press, you will find that these high-titled personages

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are much oftener made the objects of attack than of commendation. Indeed, of all classes, *theirs* is the one which is most exposed to scandalous invective and satirical abuse.

The cause of that deference which is paid to them in certain houses, is the selfish calculation of the owners, who by the basest adulation purchase the appearance of the great at their entertainments, in order to bestow *on themselves* a borrowed splendour. In short, as Champagne sparkles in their Grecian vases, and gold glitters on their servants' liveries, not for the enjoyment or convenience of the guests, but in order to impress on their minds the wealth of their host,—so, distinguished individuals are flattered, and invited to their festive boards, not from any attachment to the persons or rank of the latter, but for the purpose of exciting the admiration of the rest of the company, and in the hope of making the world believe that they, who live thus familiarly with the first characters in the metropolis, must be no less entitled to universal respect.

I have said so much, not by way of justification of such faults, (for they are neither to be excused nor palliated,) but in order to bear witness to your penetration in attributing them to the vanity of the parties; which is the real cause of all such absurdities.

But if you are surprised at seeing the nobles of

the earth treated with so much reverence by the sons of freedom in England, I am not less so at remarking the gloom and formality prevalent in the private circles of this capital, which is generally considered as the very seat of gaiety.

I must begin with acknowledging that nothing can be livelier than the appearance of the streets and public promenades; and one of my most agreeable occupations is that of observing the motley, merry crowds, who hasten to their favourite haunts as soon as a brilliant sun tempts them to leave their houses.

If I take a turn into the Garden of the Thuilleries, I find persons of both sexes, and of all ages, ranks and countries in the world, enjoying the pleasures of that delightful spot. While the young, the active, and the handsome, accoutred in all the extreme of the fashion, trip lightly along the terraces, or join the more brilliant circle of the Grand Alley, I see older persons seated under the shade of magnificent trees, reading the daily newspapers, which are always to be hired for a few *sous*.

If I extend my walk to the *Champs Elysés*, I meet carriages of every description, from the *fiacre*, the *cabriolet*, and still humbler *diligence* of St. Cloud, Marli, or Versailles, to the most elegant English equipage; while numerous parties of the smartest *beaux* and *belles* of Paris gallop by me

on horseback, all hurrying away to the *Bois de Boulogne*, and all displaying in their countenances a vivacity, truly French.

If, instead of accompanying this gay cavalcade any further, I return by the side of the river, I see, on the quays another class of people, less elegantly dressed, but not less disposed to pleasure: while formed in groups, some laugh at the wit of Punch; some play at balls for oranges; some witness the performance of a learned dog; some collect round the venders of prints, maps, and caricatures; and some listen in mute and anxious attention to the noisy eloquence of a lace-coated mountebank, who, while vaunting the infallible effect of his proffered pill, promises them all a cure for their different infirmities.

If I then visit the *Palais Royal*, (which I am told some of your countrymen style the *metropolis* of Paris, as others call Paris the capital of the world,) I find an equally gay crowd formed of persons presenting the utmost diversity of character. Here it is difficult to force one's way amidst soldiers, *abbés*, women of the town, and women of fashion, powdered *beaux* of the old *régime*, and black-haired and black-whiskered heroes of the new school, Knights of the Post, and Knights of all the Orders of Christendom, displaying the badges of their respective honours, though worn in many instances on coats whose torn sleeves and

discoloured hues are little in unison with these splendid decorations; and the crowd of French people of every description is almost equalled by that of foreigners of all nations under the sun,—Turks, Jews, Germans, Russians, Greeks, and Englishmen, who come hither to stare at the articles displayed in the many-coloured shops,—to eat ice—dine—drink coffee—to be cheated in purchasing clothes, books, or trinkets—to lose their money at the gaming-tables, or their health at some of the various temples of vice which abound in these purlieus.

If I next wander to the *Boulevard*, I witness a similar scene of general gaiety. Indeed, I know not any sight more delightful than that promenade presents towards the close of a fine day. The carriages in the centre are filled with elegant and well-dressed women, and under the shade of lofty trees on each side, numerous parties of merry pedestrians hasten forward, while picturesque groups, formed of distinct family circles, or friendly *coteries*, appear seated on chairs near the *Café Hardi*, and seem here, while breathing the pure air, to enjoy all the pleasures of social converse. Further on, the stalls covered with books, prints, and baubles of every kind, arrest for a moment the lounger's attention, which is soon withdrawn to the poodle dogs, foreign birds, quack medicines,

or forbidden pamphlets, which are forced before his eye, or recommended in whispers to his ear, by their importunate venders. These objects, the animated countenances of the pedestrians, the well lighted coffee-houses, and the shops, hotels, baths, panoramas, theatres, puppet-shows, fountains, and triumphal arches, all seen on the *Boulevard*, present together such a picture of variegated liveliness, that the stranger is bewildered in beholding it; and on leaving the scene, he only retains a general idea of having visited a spot peculiarly consecrated to pleasure.

And now to the subject of your *soirées*, or evening parties. After spending an hour in one of the promenades which I have just described, when I repair to an assembly given by some of the many distinguished personages to whom you have had the goodness to introduce me, I cannot help observing the contrast which presents itself. The stiff curtsey, and cold "*Bon soir, Monsieur*," with which, half rising from her chair, the mistress of the house receives me; the two equal rows of armed-chairs which divide the room, and, in which her female guests are ranged side by side, (reminding me of the no less formal avenues of trees by which your ancient *chateaux* are approached,) the dispersed parties of men talking politics in suppressed tones of voice, and the total

absence of that noise and loco-motion to which we are accustomed on similar occasions in England, make a party of this kind appear to me the very personification of *ennui*. Yet the natives of different nations vary so much in their opinion on such subjects, that I heard a French Duchess, by way of apology for refusing to receive one of our country-women at *ses soirées*, observe, "I will have no more English ladies at my house; for they will not stay in their places, but bustle about, and thus convert one of our elegant Parisian circles into a London *rout*, which ought more properly to be called a London *mob*."

A foreigner finds himself much embarrassed in going into one of the *salons* in which these *soirées* are given. After making his bow, what is he to do? If he happen to be acquainted with any one of the ladies who sit in awful state in the centre of the room, and have the courage to approach her, the conversation which he may begin on the weather, the *spectacle*, or the last novel, is soon ended by a chilling *Oui*, or *Non, Monsieur;* and he is again left to seek occupation. If he then presume attempt to address some of the gentlemen whom he sees talking together, he probably receives as laconic a reply; and so adieu to all chance of amusement for that evening!

Indeed, a few nights since, finding myself at

one of these assemblies near a group of *quid-nuncs*, who were discussing your late, and present, mode of electing the members of the *Corps Législatif*, I continued a patient listener for more than an hour; expecting every moment, as the subject was one on which an Englishman is supposed qualified to give some useful information, that a question or an observation might have been addressed to me, by which means I should have had an apology for joining in the conversation; but none of the talkers condescended to take the least notice of the foreigner who had ventured to become the auditor of their harangues, by which, no doubt, they thought he was highly edified.

Now, whether it arises from national jealousy, or from the peculiar hatred engendered by the late war, and the extraordinary circumstance which attended its close, I cannot pretend to say; but no fact is more certain than this, that the English are most unwelcome guests in the circles of the Parisians; and nothing short, my dear Vermont, of your strong and too partial recommendations would have procured me admittance into any of them. By the friends to whose patronage you recommended me, I am treated not only with urbanity but kindness; yet I experience such frigid civility in those whom I meet at their houses, that I often pass a very dull day, when the wish of the donor

of the *fête* is to procure me all possible enjoyment.

Nobody seems to *volunteer* an acquaintance (if I may use the phrase); and though I cannot complain of actual rudeness in any one, I see no marks of that general attention to strangers for which France was once so celebrated. You must not suspect that this is a peculiar or a peevish remark of mine: all the few English who, occasionally, find the means of creeping into French society make a similar observation. For instance, Mrs. ——, who, from being nearly related to a Parisian family of distinction, enjoys advantages greater than those possessed by any other of her countrywomen or countrymen, tells me that she shall go no more to Madame ——'s weekly parties, to which she has a general invitation, and which I need not tell you are reckoned the best in this capital. She accounts very naturally for this determination, by assuring me, that, after frequenting these assemblies for three months, she has not made a single acquaintance. "I am told," said she, "that the people I see at this house form the best company of Paris; but what consolation is this to me for going every week into a splendid crowd, in the midst of which, seated with due state in an old-fashioned armed-chair, I am condemned to pass two hours in the worst of all solitudes, while not one of the party condescends to speak to me?"

Such is the picture drawn by this lady of the situation in which she finds herself at one of these much commended *soirées*; and I confess, from the experience I have had of similar entertainments, I think the sketch is by no means an exaggerated one.

Adieu!

C. DARNLEY.

LETTER XII.

From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley, Bart.

London.

I PERCEIVE, my dear Darnley, that the foreigner who is desirous of knowing the real character of this country must make a lengthened visit here. The inhabitants of the continent who come hither for only a few weeks see nothing but the surface, and go away with a thousand unfavourable impressions, which a little longer residence would have been sufficient to remove. The English are in general shy and reserved in their manners; and even among the highest classes, the best and most amiable persons are only properly known when seen in the interior of their respective families. To contract such an intimacy with them as enables a stranger to view them in this manner, is extremely difficult; for no visits, I find, are paid or received in an evening; and even before dinner, "*Not at home*" is the answer given at nine doors out of ten at which one knocks.

Nor are the crowded dinners and still more numerous assemblies, of which I have already had

occasion to speak, at all calculated to afford opportunities for forming those habits of familiar intercourse in which your countrymen appear to the greatest advantage.

The persons who are the most conspicuous in the British metropolis (I mean the votaries of dissipation and notoriety who fill the annals of the daily newspapers) are by no means the most respectable members of the community; yet they are precisely the objects to whom all eyes are directed. Flattered, talked of, followed, they are the leaders of all the principal entertainments of this great city; and from *them* thousands receive the law, who are their superiors in morals, manners, and every amiable propensity. Is it then extraordinary, that foreigners form their opinion of the English character, on the specimens presented to them by those who appear to be so universally admired? Yet, certainly, it is impossible that they could take it from a less favourable model.

I am happy to find that my recommendations have been of some use to you at Paris; but, as I remarked in a former letter, you have amply repaid the obligation, by procuring for me the *entrée* of several private families in this town, in whose domestic circles I have learnt to know and appreciate the many good qualities which distinguish the gentry of this country, and which are often

hidden under a cold and forbidding exterior. I have also been received with cordial kindness by one or two individuals, to whom it had at different times been my good fortune to show some trifling attentions in France. Among these I must particularly mention Mr. Gourville, descended from an ancient Norman family: his ancestors were fol lowers of William the Conqueror, and he still inherits the estate which was then allotted to his progenitors. The income derived from this property, is amply sufficient for all the elegancies, as well as comforts, of a liberal establishment. My friend being quite free both from vanity and ambition, though possessed of considerable talent, has neither adopted a profession—gone into parliament—nor bought, at the price of sacrificing all manly independence and generous feeling, the patronage of the great. By connexion, he is related to several of your noblest houses; his father was a distinguished general; and his wife, who, besides being a very pretty and very agreeable woman, shares the best properties of her husband, was the daughter of a baronet. This amiable couple occupy a spacious house in Portman-square; but the luxuries which abound there are reserved for the use of a small circle of intimate acquaintance whom the owners really love and esteem, and not for the "*five hundred friends*," with whom a leading *belle* loves to fill her mansion. The

company I meet at Mr. Gourville's table is *select* in the strictest sense of the word: it consists of all that is estimable in character, pleasing in manner, and respectable from talent and acquirements; —men of sense, statesmen, lawyers, literary men, and distinguished artists: while the female part of the society is no less irreproachable in morals, than interesting from all the combined charms of mind and feminine attraction. Persons of rank are often found at this house, because persons of rank are often in England the patterns of every virtue; but it is evident, from the manner in which they are received, that they are welcome for their merits, and not for the sound of their titles or the length of their pedigrees.

I cannot help introducing you to this family, because my happiest hours are passed at their hospitable board. There, at small and well chosen parties, I hear politics discussed without rancour, books without pedantry, and private anecdotes without scandal or ill-temper. Indeed, after spending several agreeable days at this house, I am almost reconciled to one of your usages, which at first appeared to me most objectionable;—I mean the retiring of the ladies after dinner. Here, though they follow that custom, they stay long enough to animate the conversation, and to give it that charm which is inseparable from their presence. The short interval which the gentlemen pass at table after their departure is devoted to

politics, science, and other grave subjects not suited to the tastes of women. When we join them again at tea, those lighter and more elegant topics are resumed, which are best treated when a circle is formed of both sexes.

I have introduced the names of Mr. and Mrs. Gourville for two reasons: first, to do justice to them, and, through them, to a class of persons who form one of the best features of English society; and next, to mention an instance of the impertinence and contempt, with which respectable individuals of this description are viewed and spoken of by those who consider themselves as the leaders of the *ton*, when such individuals are too proud and too independent to range themselves under *their* banners. I accompanied these amiable friends of mine a few evenings since to the Opera-house, where they hire an annual box, not kept to be let and re-let as a subject of speculation, (a habit very common among great personages,) but, like their table, reserved for the use of their intimate acquaintance.

Well: while (after the performance) I was in the lobby with Mr. and Mrs. Gourville, waiting for the carriage, the Countess of—— (who has taken it into her head to be very civil to me) happened to pass. On this occasion she returned my bow with unusual stiffness; and the night afterwards, when I met her at an assembly, she took me aside

and said, "M. le Marquis, as I feel much interested about your success in London, I hope you will not think me officious in hinting what your ignorance of our habits may prevent your knowing,—that if you wish to keep *good* company here, you must carefully avoid being seen with persons of a different description.—Tell me candidly, who were *those people* with whom I saw you last night at the Opera-house?"

"An English gentleman and lady of the most unexceptionable character."

"No doubt; and so are my butcher and his wife, yet not very fit companions for a French nobleman."

"But permit me to assure your Ladyship, that Mr. Gourville, on whose arm I leaned, is the representative of one of the oldest families in Europe."

"Not of so ancient a family," interrupted the Countess, "I am sure, as my Welsh curate; yet I barely allow the reverend gentleman to sit down in my presence.—But what did you say was the name of *this man*? I am sure I never heard the name before."

"Gourville:—and besides being extremely well born, he possesses a very ample estate."

"And so do half the haberdashers, grocers, and cheesemongers in the city."

"He is likewise the son of a general."

"That proves nothing, *M. le Marquis*. His

father may have risen from the ranks, like many of your French Marshals."

"And Mrs. Gourville is the daughter of a baronet."

"Who, perhaps, after selling plums and mangos in Cheapside for two-thirds of his life, became at last Lord Mayor, went up with an address, was dubbed a knight, and by and by, for some ministerial job, admitted into our very numerous list of hereditary *Chevaliers*. We have long ceased to rank baronets in this country much above those whom you call in France *la canaille*."

After a dialogue of this kind, in which her ladyship was always prepared with a *repartee*, I endeavoured to explain, that the friends of whom she spoke so contemptuously were no less respectable for birth, education and fortune, than estimable for the qualities of their minds and heart. Finding that I made no impression by such arguments, I next reminded the Countess of the many persons, inferior in every respect to Mr. and Mrs. Gourville, whom I had met at *her* house, among whom I specified Mrs. Latitat the attorney's wife, and Miss Fussock the daughter of a city drysalter, both of whom her ladyship had lately taken under her peculiar patronage.

"Nonsense! nonsense!" exclaimed the Countess; "these are *tolerated vulgars*, whom we condescend to *bear with*, rather than to *admit* into our circles,

on condition of certain accommodations which they afford us. We go to their splendid mansions precisely as we go to Almack's; and as we make it an indispensable consideration, that nobody should be admitted at either without *our* special permission, the *donors* of the entertainment form the only objectionable people in their *parties*. And if in return for *galas*, to which *we ask* the company, and the expenses of which come out of *their* pockets, we deign to ask these good folks once or twice a year to one of our *sweeps*, they think themselves too much honoured. But, *M. le Marquis*, it is useless to have any discussion on a subject which my long experience in these matters enables me to understand much better than you. Let me tell you, that there is a *certain set* which governs every thing in this town; and as you Catholics say there is no safety out of the pale of mother church, so in London there is no fashion out of our circle. Into that favoured set I was labouring to get you properly initiated; but the attempt will be fruitless, if you will keep company with *unorthodox quizzes*. In short, you must belong to *us*, and *be every thing*, or renounce *le grand monde* and become *non-presentable*."

So saying, her ladyship gave her arm to a *dandy* who was passing by, and, leaving me to my meditations, shook her fan and tripped away.

It seems to me that this *strange* distinction certainly exists in the society of London, and there

is no person so low in birth, education, or character, but possessed of wealth, and disposed to lavish it in purchasing the patronage of such a lady as she whom I have just described, who may not gain admittance into the highest circles, from which the most honourable, the most virtuous, and the most enlightened individuals are often excluded, if they disdain to use such base means of conciliating the favour of the great.

The undefined line which is thus attempted to be drawn between this *certain set* (consisting of the most vicious and most notorious of the nobility, followed by a servile race of humble flatterers,) and the rest of the gentlemen and ladies of England, is certainly a much greater absurdity than that which the pride of ancestry has established on the Continent.

To require a pedigree of sixteen untarnished quarters, as a qualification for being a member of good company, is, I confess, sufficiently ridiculous; yet, in this free country, to consider no person as worthy of being visited, however respectable by birth, fortune, or education, unless a member of this *certain set*, is a still more striking instance of human folly and inconsistency. It is stripping your king of the prerogative of conferring honours, and bestowing it on a little self-constituted oligarchy, formed of all the most vicious, most indecent, and most contemptible

characters in the British capital. I shall resume this subject again; but in the mean time I must say, that when I leave England, I shall feel prouder at having made one such acquaintance as Mr. Gourville's, than at seeing my name placed high on the list of this *certain set*. Farewell.

DE VERMONT.

LETTER XIII.

From Sir Charles Darnley, Bart., to the Marquis de Vermont.

MY DEAR MARQUIS, *Paris.*

THOUGH you are somewhat severe in your remarks on that high and mighty power, the *certain set* of London, your last letter has pleased me much; because, in your picture of the family of Mr. Gourville, I recognise a society in which, above all others, I wish you to pass your time. You will find in that respectable and also numerous circle (for in London many persons of good families, large fortunes, and extensive information, live only for themselves and their friends, and decline all intercourse with what is called "the gay world,") the best antidote to the follies and vices which may disgust you among the more notorious but less virtuous members of this *certain set*.

Indeed, I believe that no person ought to form an opinion of national manners, unless he has been long enough in the country which he is visiting to be admitted *behind the scenes*, if I may be permitted to use the expression.

You tell me that already you begin to be re-

conciled to many customs in London, which at first appeared to you most improper and unbecoming. As my acquaintance with Paris increases, I not only find many things to admire, but, even in those which I cannot commend, much to palliate and soften their impropriety. In my last letter, I complained of the gloom which seemed to pervade the evening parties of your most distinguished houses. I have since endeavoured to account for a *trait* so inconsistent with the general character of the French, and I believe I have discovered it in that attention so generally paid to the observance of *la bienséance*, a word which cannot be literally translated, but which means, I believe, an outward appearance of decency and correctness, which, in the words of our celebrated Burke, "takes from vice half its deformity in stripping it of all its grossness."

I am told that, however intimately persons of opposite sexes may have passed together the preceding hours of the day,—when they afterwards meet at one of these *soirées*, they exchange the most formal bows, observe the strictest decorum, and address each other with all the etiquette of frigid civility. Now, though your countrymen are, as I have before observed, the best actors in the world, so unnatural a part cannot be played without much restraint on the feelings of the performers; and hence that general stiffness and dul-

ness which have surprised me so much in these assemblies. In England, you have occasionally remarked, and censured, the too great familiarity with which unmarried young people converse together in public. That impropriety (if it be one) is occasioned by the difficulty which they find of meeting in private, owing to the extreme strictness of our manners. When, therefore, two persons are mutually attached, and accidentally thrown together in one of our crowded *galas*, it is impossible to check the ardour of youth—one speaks, and the other listens, in spite of all the dictates of prudence and propriety, and in spite too of the presence of a thousand observing and criticising lookers-on. All this is reversed in France; most of the ladies who form your society are *married* women; and if one of them is indiscreet enough to encourage an admirer (pardon the supposition), she has so many opportunities of receiving her Lothario *chez elle*, that both parties would be equally foolish and indecent, were they to tell their tale of love in the presence of all their acquaintance. Yet it must require no trifling command both of countenance and feeling, after spending the morning *tête-à-tête*, to meet in the evening like acquaintances newly introduced.

À propos, I must not forget to tell you of a curious discovery which I lately made in the annals of gallantry. I happened a few evenings since to

be standing at one of these assemblies near the beautiful *Vicomtesse de* ——, when Mr. —— (whose gravity you know almost amounts to primness) approached her with the usual ceremonious bow, and spoke to her for some minutes with distant coldness. As, however, the conversation grew animated, (forgetting I suppose where he was,) in a fit of absence he said, "*Mais, ma chère* ——!" She coloured and frowned—the rest of the company stared—and Mr. —— perceiving his mistake made a thousand apologies to the *Vicomtesse*, who indignantly asked him what had induced him to address her so familiarly; while, by way of excuse, he told her that he had been spending the morning with his sister in the country, and talking to her on family affairs of great importance, which so filled his head that he really thought he had been still speaking to *her*.

I mentioned this occurrence on the following day to a French friend well acquainted with *la carte du pays*, who was extremely amused, and observed, "As Mr. —— is the coldest and most cautious of men, I am indeed surprised at his being guilty of such a violation of *les usages du monde:* I never should have expected that he would call *Madame la Vicomtesse* by so endearing a name in *public*; but all Paris knows that he has long enjoyed the privilege of doing so in *private.*"

Indeed, though I cannot compliment you by

saying that I think your *morals* purer than ours, I confess you set us an example as to the *appearance* of propriety; and I am every day more and more surprised at the external decency which the *manners* of all classes assume at Paris, as the strongest proof which I can adduce of their general attention to outward decorum. I shall now beg leave to relate a circumstance which lately happened to myself.

An English friend well acquainted with your usages, offered to take me to a ball about to be given by a female acquaintance of his, and brought me an invitation in the usual form. At the appointed time he called for me in his carriage, and we drove to a splendid hotel in one of the best streets of this city. The mansion, containing a numerous suite of rooms, was scarcely less in dimensions than the palace of Carlton-House; and the furniture, decorations, and attendance, all bore the appearance of the establishment of a person of the highest rank. We were received by a middle-aged lady of polished manners.

Among the company assembled I observed several gentlemen decorated with stars and other badges of French, and foreign, orders; and the female members of the society, whose dresses were both correct and elegant, were seated as usual, side by side, in two rows of armed-chairs. When the musicians, consisting of a full band, struck up

a favourite air, the dancers selected their partners, led them with due ceremony to the centre of the room, and at the conclusion of the quadrille reconducted them to their places.

Nothing could be more decorous than the conduct of all the persons who formed the party. Not a word was said at which the coldest prude could have taken offence, nor was even a meretricious look exchanged between any of the company. Yet after I had given my friend and introducer a fair opportunity of enjoying his joke, by commending on this occasion (as I had often done before) the superior decency of French manners, he informed me that, in spite of all this display of *exterior* correctness, the place we were at was a common gaming house (such as we call in London a *Hell*), and was part of the establishment of the too-well-known *Salon;* that the elegant *lady* who presided was the celebrated Madame de N—— (whom, in a report of the gaieties of Paris, our *Morning Post* thought fit to call a Duchess); that the ladies, whose *proper* conduct I had so much commended, were either kept girls or public women belonging to the Palais Royal; and that the elegant dresses which they wore on the occasion were hired from an adjoining masquerade warehouse.

After this example of attention to appearances even in the most profligate, it must be acknow-

ledged that, if you are not votaries of virtue, you involuntarily show your respect for it by assuming its garb.

Whether the boasted *bienséance* operas in the way which the words of Mr. Burke already quoted express; or whether, in decorating vice with the attributes of propriety, we hide its disgusting form, and thereby assist its progress, is a question in morals which I shall not stop to discuss.

Adieu!

C. DARNLEY.

LETTER XIV.

From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley, Bart.

MY DEAR SIR CHARLES, *London.*

AGREEABLY to the promise with which I concluded my last letter, I now resume the subject of that *certain set* who appear to me the dictators of London society, and who yet are no less implicitly obeyed than if they received the most legitimate authority for their usurped omnipotence. To be thought a person of fashion, or, in other words, to move in this magical circle, is the grand object of the vain; and in what assemblage do not the vain form the majority? For this purpose, ruinous expenses are incurred, debts contracted, friends neglected, and the most abandoned characters not only received, but courted and admired. The consequence of this prevailing weakness is no less fatal to rational conversation, than to morals and dignified independence.

Not only are costly entertainments given, often with great inconvenience to the donors, for the sole purpose of exhibiting in the number of their guests a galaxy of K. C. B.s, lords, ambassadors, and

cabinet ministers, but the topics discussed at these tables are all chosen with a view of displaying an intimate acquaintance with what is called the *great world;* but which is, in fact, a very *little* and very contemptible one. The mistress of the house asks, perhaps, the duke who sits next her, whether His Grace is going to the Almack's Wednesday ball, or the Friday's French play at the Argyle-street Rooms. The mention of these places sets the whole party on the tip-toe of expectation. Some few of the company, more favoured than the rest, are members of this all-ennobling society, and greedily join in the conversation, in order to display to their less fortunate and envying neighbours that they possess that advantage. Some, who after various attempts had proved unsuccessful candidates, maintain a gloomy silence, and tremble every moment lest an awkward question addressed to them should force a reply which might betray their disappointment. Others again of humbler pretensions, but equally tinctured with vanity, listen with painful attention; and, treasuring up every word which falls on the *important* subject, lay up a borrowed fund of useful information, by the aid of which, when invited to a city or a country party, *they too* may be enabled to talk of the *dear* Argyle-street Rooms; and, shining with "lustre not their own," may hope to

give themselves all the importance of initiated members.

And now, my dear Darnley, allow me to express to you my surprise that, at a moment when the general diffusion of science and useful knowledge of all kinds is rapidly overturning, on the Continent, those hateful distinctions by which one portion of the same people is marked and separated from the other, England, viewed by the rest of the world as presenting the model on which all national improvements must be made, should suffer in its capital the establishment of a society, the foundation of which can be directed but to one object; namely, to draw an insuperable barrier between the nobility (carrying in their train a few of their servile satellites) and the rest of their equally well born, equally well educated, equally well mannered, and equally independent countrymen. If I might be permitted to paraphrase the well known expression of Joseph the Second, I should say, "*Mon métier à moi est d'être aristocrat.*" I cannot, therefore, be supposed to entertain any prejudice against a class of persons corresponding with that to which I belong in my own country: but while I acknowledge that there is not a public or a private virtue of which most honourable living examples may not be found among the members of your House of

Lords, what I have already seen of English society compels me to add, that in these particulars they possess no exclusive privilege. The most amiable, the most enlightened, and the most distinguished of your peers have no pretensions to superiority over innumerable commoners who might be named; whether we try their respective merits by the standard of talent, knowledge, moral rectitude, polished manners, landed property, public services, or even ancient descent. Such being the perfect equality existing between the parties in every thing but *rank*, is it not the very acmé of absurdity that, in the nineteenth century, and in the metropolis of the freest country of Europe, such an institution as that of the Argyle-street Rooms should spring into existence, for the sole purpose of separating the nobility from the gentry of England? The pretext of excluding improper company is too shallow to impose on any one. It is true that such is the alleged motive for which a few high-titled ladies are arrayed with arbitrary power in choosing the members of the society; but it is evident from the lists of the company, so frequently published in *The Morning Post*, that vice, however notorious, if clothed in exalted rank, is never excluded; and modest unassuming merit, however estimable, rarely, if ever, admitted. Nobody, who has not visited this town, can believe the importance which the difficulty of be-

coming a member of it has given to this institution.

The wives and daughters of your most respectable country gentlemen no sooner arrive in London, than, forgetting all the high feelings of conscious virtue and hereditary pride, they seem anxious, at any price, to purchase the honour of belonging to "The Argyle-street Rooms," and frequenting "the Wednesday balls at Almack's." To obtain this far-sought prize, there is no trouble they will not give themselves, and no baseness to which they will not submit.

Even mothers of families, who have gone through life with untainted reputation, if unable to gain the envied distinction themselves, will condescend to court the patronage of women of very different characters, and to entrust their daughters,

"In flower of youth and beauty's prime,"

to the care of peeresses, whose indiscretion would have banished them long since from all association with their own sex, had not their respective lords been conveniently blind to all their faults.

No costs or pains are spared to propitiate these deities of fashion. Hot-houses are stripped of their pines, and manors of their game; art, manœuvre, intrigue, and solicitation, are all tried in turns; and when, after various attempts and fre-

quent disappointments, the fair candidate obtains at length a license, signed by one of the noble directresses, authorizing her, on the payment of *seven shillings*, to enter this *sanctum sanctorum*—what is the pleasure, beyond that of having conquered opposing difficulties, which, in return for all her trouble, she enjoys?—She sees quadrilles and waltzes not at all better danced than they are at five hundred other assemblies, while these exhibitions are rendered here still more insipid than elsewhere by the apathy and *sang froid* of the noble performers.

She finds little to admire, and much to disgust:—youth conceited and forward; and age painted, bedizened, and frivolous;—high rank without high principles; lofty titles contaminated by degrading conduct; boorish shyness mixed up in the same character with excessive pride; and a scorn for every body else expressed by those who have merited the contempt of all mankind.

Satisfied with 'the honour of basking' in the sunshine of fashion, she must not hope to be entertained, and may think herself fortunate if she retires *unquizzed;* for your nobility have, I find, the detestable habit of attempting to ridicule whatever is new to them; and the most elegant female, unless her costume is servilely copied from that of one of the *infallible* leaders of the society, rarely passes unhurt through the ordeal of a first appear-

ance at Almack's. It happens, sometimes, when refused admittance to these balls, the candidat is allowed to purchase a ticket for the French play* (for the latter is considered a minor honour); and in this case, supposing that she is acquainted with our language and has never seen a performance of the kind before, she may derive some amusement from the entertainment. But here, again, if she listens too attentively to the actors, she will scarcely escape the lash of her criticising neighbours: for though your leaders of the *ton* insist on having French plays exhibited before them, very few are qualified to enjoy that amusement; and all are so worn down by the labours of a life of pleasure, that to appear interested in what is going forward on the stage proves the person, in whom these feelings are yet visible, to be a novice in their circles.

À propos: I suppose you have heard of the trick lately played on this noble society by one of our provincial actors. Tempted by the offer of a salary at least twenty times greater than that which he received at home, he consented to come over to England, and to appear on the boards of the Argyle-street Rooms. In performing a new proverb, the words of which he had carelessly learned, he forgot his part; and, trusting partly to his

* The French play, when this letter was written, formed part of the Argyle-street establishment.

own impudence and partly to the ignorance and inattention of his noble auditors, he said to the female comedian with whom he was carrying on the dialogue (while he spoke with increased rapidity): "*J'ai oublié mon rôle—n'importe:—continuons toujours de jaser. Ces Messieurs* GOD DAMNS *ne comprennent pas un mot de ce que nous disons:—il suffit que nous parlions.*"

But enough, and perhaps too much, on the subject of the Argyle-street Rooms; yet I cannot drop the topic without entreating you, my dear Darnley, whenever you return to England, to exert all your influence against the growing popularity of this establishment.

What say you? would it not be both very wise and very feasible to turn the tables on these aristocratic usurpers, and to form a "Subscription Coterie," to which no persons should be admissible of higher rank than that of baronets and their families? If a society of this kind were established, and so regulated that no dishonoured man, and no woman of even *doubtful* character, should be found on its lists, I think it would prove a dangerous rival to that of the *Argyle-street Rooms;* and there can be no doubt that, among the numerous well born, well educated, and wealthy commoners, who frequent London, so ample a supply of taste, beauty, elegance and refinement might be obtained, that nobody would

miss the Peers, Right Honourables, and Honourables, who would be excluded by the rules of the institution.

I speak with warmth on this subject, perhaps with greater than it intrinsically deserves; but you know I am an enthusiastic admirer of your Constitution, in the preservation of which all mankind are interested; and manners are so intimately connected with laws and institutions, that, if the nobility are to be allowed to dictate in private society, they may by degrees arrogate to themselves the right also of assuming a superiority in the discussion of your public affairs, little suited to a mixed form of government. I know this would not be submitted to by the nation at large; but if such a spirit is not checked at first, it may cost you no little trouble to subdue it afterwards.

Adieu!

DE VERMONT.

LETTER XV.

Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.

MY DEAR DE VERMONT, *Paris.*

AS you continue to comment on the extraordinary respect paid to *rank* in London, I cannot help observing in return, that in spite of the establishment of a system of professed equality during the first years of the Revolution, and in spite of the wit and graver remonstrances of your philosophic writers, a similar weakness is still more apparent in the circles of Paris.

Every day brings to my knowledge some fresh evidence of the unextinguished pride and unaltered pretensions of your *ancienne noblesse.* Though all have suffered in person or in fortune, and though, by the present code of laws, neither their confiscated estates nor their ancient privileges have been restored, and nothing remains to them but an empty name; yet the estimate which they form of their own importance is not in the slightest degree lowered by these united circumstances.

I lately accompanied a female friend when she went to pay a visit to *Madame la Marquisse de* ——, to whom, when she was an emigrant in En-

gland, my fair countrywoman had had the opportunity of rendering some essential services. On giving in our names at the porter's lodge of the splendid hotel which this lady now inhabits, we were ushered into a small and shabby apartment on the ground floor, where she received us rather with the condescension of a superior than the politeness of an equal. After we had been some minutes arrived, the folding doors were thrown open with much noise and ceremony, and a valet-de-chambre announced *Madame la Duchesse de* ——, when a little withered, highly painted, and ill-dressed woman hobbled into the room. The *Marquisse* (who had scarcely risen from her chair when Mrs. ——, to whom she owed so many obligations, made her appearance) now sprang forward with the utmost alacrity, and after half a dozen low curtsies, exclaimed, "*Ah! Madame la Duchesse, que je suis ravie de vous voir; mais vraiment je suis honteuse de vous recevoir dans ce vilain petit cabinet. Je me jette à vous pieds, et je vous en faits mille excuses.*"

In short, then, while she seemed to think no apology due to two foreigners (one of whom had conferred on her important favours) for receiving them in the worst room of her spacious mansion; she expressed and seemed to feel herself guilty of great indecorum for treating in a similar manner a visitor of her own country; but then this visitor was

a Duchess, and belonged to one of the most illustrious houses of France.

Indeed, I suspect that the haughtiness and assumed superiority of the old nobility contributed in no small degree, after the first restoration of Louis XVIII., to disgust the Marshals and other leading men of the new school; and that this feeling, more almost than any thing else, impelled many of them to desert the standard of the Bourbons for that of Bonaparte, when the latter returned so unexpectedly from Elba. Nor has the imminent danger to which the present dynasty was then exposed, nor their uncertain tenour at this moment, taught the friends of royalty the virtue of moderation; while the merits of the most distinguished generals do not exempt them from the sneer and contempt of those who fancy they were born their superiors.

A British Peer, now at Paris, tells me that he dined a few days since at a private house and in mixed company with *M. Le Maréchal* ——, who, I need scarcely remind you, besides being one of the bravest officers of your army, remained faithful to the King, and accompanied His Majesty to Ghent. My noble countryman, pleased at having an opportunity of conversing with a person every way so eminent and respectable, seated himself next the Marshal, and paid him every possible attention; when a Count ——, who was his neigh-

bour-on the other side, said in a loud whisper, "*Comment, milord, pouvez-vous parler à cet homme là? ne savez-vous pas qu'il a commencé sa carrière par être tambour?*" Such, indeed, is the kind of answer which I often receive when, indulging a pardonable curiosity, I make inquiries respecting the present situation of those who a few years back, as the leaders of your victorious armies, figured with so much *éclât* on the theatre of Europe. The obscurity of their birth seems, in the eyes of these hereditary grandees, to render them so unworthy of notice, that neither their military glory, nor even their present devotion to the cause of legitimacy, can form an excuse for speaking of them with interest, or treating them with respect.

I deplore with you the absurd homage paid in England as well as in France to *mere rank;* I mean when it is unaccompanied with virtue, talent, or valour. Still, though I acknowledge that both countries may afford traits of such weakness, I think I can see a strong line of distinction which may be drawn between the prejudices of the two nations. I do not think that any excellence however eminent, whether civil or military, could, in the eyes of a Frenchman of the old school, place a person of low origin precisely on a footing with the representative of an illustrious house; while with us, distinguished national services and great professional merits are not only rewarded with

the highest honours which the sovereign can bestow, but those who so deservedly obtain them enjoy the full importance and consideration attached to their newly acquired rank. Nor do I think that a Thurlow or a Nelson was viewed either with envy or contempt, even by the proudest of our Peers, because the one was the son of a butcher, and the other that of a country curate. Here, on the contrary, I find that a returned emigrant, because he really is, or pretends to be, the descendant of a noble family, not only fancies himself superior to the most renowned hero who does not possess the advantage of birth, but also that he is entitled to claim as a matter of right any place or office which may be vacant, no matter how little qualified he may be by age, education, or previous habits, to hold it. Such a man complains loudly of the ingratitude and injustice of the Government, when to his pretensions are preferred those of a candidate very inferior to him in the quarterings of his arms, but in every other respect more fitted to discharge the duties of the place with credit to himself and benefit to the public. On such occasions I hear the disappointed noble vent his indignation in terms like these: "*Comment—me refuser! un homme comme moi, une personne de ma naissance et de mes pretensions, et de donner la place à un parvenu, à un enfant de la revolution, dont le père a peut-être été laquais! quelle injustice!—quelle*

infamie! que le pauvre Roi est trompé!" Every speech of this kind ends with abuse of the Ministry and pity for the King*; for while His Majesty wisely considers all his people as equally entitled to his protection, and allots his favours according to the respective merits of the claimants, two-thirds of the old *noblesse* will not believe it possible, that the monopoly of all the offices of state is with his free consent withheld from them. The wish of the party here called the *Ultra-Royalists*, is not to add to the prerogative of the Crown, in order to increase its splendour or its security, but to get back into their own hands, exclusively, the helm of state.

A lady, well acquainted with the sentiments of that faction, said to me one day, "*La France a été heureusement gouverné pendant dix siècles par des preux Chevaliers.—Pourquoi donc veut-on les priver à présent d'un pouvoir si légitime?*"

But after observing how little the members of the ancient aristocracy have learnt in the school of adversity, I must with the impartiality of a calm observer be permitted to add, that those who call themselves the *friends of freedom* have equally disdained the lessons traced by experience in characters of blood. Though the events of the Revolution prove to demonstration that licentiousness

* Written before the late changes in the administration of affairs at Paris.

is the parent of despotism, I daily meet with persons who, both in their writings and in conversation, recommend the wildest theories of democratic equality. And while it is self-evident that if the Bourbons were driven from the throne at this moment, either the Allies would again enter France, and treat it for the third time as a conquered country, or that the military, by whom alone such a Revolution could be effected, would restore the iron despotism of Napoleon,—the advocates of civil liberty are the professed enemies of the present establishment. Not philosophical enough to reflect that the mild character and debilitated person of Louis XVIII. are circumstances peculiarly favourable to the formation of a liberal government under the auspices of a monarch who has neither the means nor the inclination to conciliate a powerful army, they ridicule the infirmities and peaceful virtues of their amiable sovereign, and would willingly exchange *him* for one of those scourges of mankind who, under the name of heroes, rule their own subjects with a rod of iron, and spread over the rest of the world the horrors of war, famine, and desolation.

It is true that the King is more popular than the other members of his family; but I am sorry to add that this popularity is rather comparative than positive. In short, I find your politicians on both sides deserve the title which has been

given them of "*Ultras.*" I seldom venture to express an opinion on these matters; but when I do, I am called a friend of anarchy by the aristocratical party, and an advocate of despotism by the Liberals; nor can I persuade these fiery partisans of either faction, that the moderation they condemn arises from an anxious wish to see France, in common with the rest of the world, enjoy the blessings of rational freedom.

I have not time to resume the subject of your last letter; but I cannot conclude without assuring you that I heartily disapprove and condemn the establishment of such Societies as Almack's and the Argyle-street Rooms, and all similar attempts which tend to introduce German distinctions into English society.

I am happy to perceive, that while you discover the foibles you are not insensible to the merits of my countrymen, and that all the higher classes are not condemned for the faults of a few.

Continue, my dear de Vermont, to cultivate the acquaintance of such families as Mr. Gourville's, and believe me, examples of similar uncontaminated yet polished manners are by no means rare in England. Recollect that one profligate Lord, or one abandoned Countess, makes twice as much noise as a hundred persons of corresponding rank, whose virtues are only known to a small circle of admiring friends, while the latter carefully conceal

their charities, and avoid saying or doing any thing which may draw on them the eyes of public curiosity. Among persons of the most exalted rank in England, examples of every kind of excellence may be found; and in the numerous class of well-born and well-educated gentry, there are thousands who would have done honour to any situation however elevated,—the knowledge of whose merits is confined to their families, their school-fellows, their fellow-collegians, and immediate neighbours.

Adieu,

C. DARNLEY.

LETTER XVI.

The Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley.

MY DEAR DARNLEY, *London.*

YOU complain in your last letter that our French politicians run into extremes; or, to repeat your phrase, which is in the mouth of every body, that they are all "*Ultras.*" Can you be surprised, after a revolution which called into play the strongest passions of the human heart, and during the progress of which some lost their fortunes and dearest relatives, some from the highest pinnacle of wealth and grandeur were hurled into the lowest abyss of poverty and wretchedness, and others again were as suddenly raised from insignificance to riches and importance,—that none should be able to discuss with calmness, those public questions which to their eyes appear still big with similar eventful changes?

The two great parties, into which those who reflect at all on such topics in France have been divided for the last thirty years, remain as positive and as inflexible as ever in their opposite opinions. The original opposers of the revolution, in spite of their own private sufferings and the varied calamities of their country, retain their original pre-

judices against the changes which were then introduced; because they try to convince their fellow-citizens, as well as themselves, that all these evils had one common origin—the propagation of liberal opinions. They therefore raise their voices with redoubled zeal against the dissemination of doctrines which, according to *them*, must always be attended with similar consequences.

Those, on the contrary, who think that the revolution was brought about by a variety of causes, many of which were inevitable, and that the subsequent misfortunes of France were generated rather by a misapplication of principles, fundamentally right, than by the natural effects of a more enlightened form of government, are still the strenuous advocates of the latter; because, as you truly observe, if "Licentiousness is the parent of Despotism," rational freedom is the precursor of good order, peace and happiness. But, without denying that our French *Quidnuncs* on both sides are *Ultras*, permit me to observe that the name is equally applicable to two-thirds of *your* politicians, and you will agree with me, that a want of moderation on such subjects is a greater fault in England, where you have been so long accustomed to the blessings of Liberty, than in France, where we are tyros in the science of political economy, and still smarting under the recollection of recent sufferings. Indeed it amuses me much to observe,

that while the excellence of your Constitution is contended for by all your countrymen, (however they may differ on other subjects,) every body has some alteration or improvement to suggest,—though, were it attempted, it might hazard the safety of the noble edifice so generally admired.

Your *Government-men*, as they call themselves *par eminence*, while they profess the warmest attachment to the existing laws, are the first to find fault with the proudest characteristics of your envied system of policy. If a philippic in an opposition newspaper excites their anger, they deplore the freedom of the press, though without the latter there could be no public opinion; and without public opinion, how nugatory were all your charters and statutes in favour of popular rights! If the Minister finds himself checked in his career of ambition or extravagance by the eloquence of his opponents in the House of Commons, these same politicians lament that so much valuable time is lost in making long speeches; and many a broad hint is thrown out, as to the propriety of putting some wholesome restraints on the licentiousness of parliamentary debates. If a riot occurs, or a few blows are exchanged at a county meeting, the folly and danger of suffering such assemblies are talked of in terms more suited to the courtiers of an absolute sovereign, than to the subjects of the freest

state in Europe. If the author of an alleged libel is acquitted by the tribunal to which the wisdom of your laws has deputed the examination of such questions, the trial by jury is spoken of with contempt; and if a person, found guilty of a similar offence, receives no excessive punishment at the hands of the judges, even those venerable magistrates are accused of partiality. If a demagogue becomes troublesome by his harangues or his writings, a strong wish is expressed, though England is, generally speaking, in a state of the most perfect repose, that your admirable law of Habeas Corpus should be again suspended: and if a mob in the streets be guilty of some trifling disturbances, these professed admirers of the constitution recommend the military being immediately called out to suppress them.

While such is their own mode of showing their attachment to the institutions of their ancestors, they stigmatize with the name of *Radicals* all who presume to recommend the slightest correction of those manifest abuses which time has introduced; and seem entirely to forget, that one of the great causes of the perfection of your Government is, that it was not the creature of speculation, but the work of successive ages; that it was brought by degrees to its present excellence, and possesses within itself a perpetual power of renovating its exhausted strength.

In short, while these noisy advocates of the

British system of jurisprudence pronounce it the noblest monument of human wisdom, they show all the inclination, though happily they possess not the power, to deprive it of those bulwarks and characteristics which constitute at once its strength and beauty.

I think, when you recollect the run of ordinary conversation in England, you will allow that the language used by two-thirds of ministerial men is such as I have described; and those who talk in this way are surely no less entitled to the name of *Ultras*, than the corresponding class of politicians on the other side of the channel.

A great majority of your tradesmen and manufacturers, and a very small minority of your peers and gentry, run into the opposite extreme;—*they, too*, pretend that they are enthusiastic admirers of the constitution of their country: but it is not the constitution under which you attained your present unexampled prosperity; but a constitution of fancied perfection, such as at no period of your history you ever possessed, and such perhaps as it is not permitted to the weakness of human nature to command in any stage, however advanced, of political civilization.

Blind to the innumerable advantages which, in spite of all its defects, the system of government as now administered still affords, they contend that you are no longer free. Though foreigners,

in reading your numerous newspapers, and observing that there is no rank so elevated, and no character so sacred, which is not at times made the subject of the most wanton and scandalous attacks,—are astonished at the possibility of maintaining peace and good order, while such publications issue daily from the press; these persons assert that there is no channel left through which the people may be enlightened, and taught to know their real interests. Though it is evident, from the comparative prices of the public funds of different countries at this time, that the moneyed people of Europe prefer four per cent. in England to seven or eight in France, Austria, or Prussia, we are told that Great Britain is on the verge of bankruptcy. Though the mighty capitals accumulated and employed in commerce, manufactures, and national improvements, make the riches of this island the wonder of the world; and though no person travels through your provinces, or passes a week in your metropolis, without viewing with surprise the general appearance of comfort and decency which all ranks of your people display; these politicians inform us (because your agricultural and mercantile interests, after several years of unexampled prosperity, are now experiencing a temporary reverse of fortune), that the whole nation is reduced to beggary. For all these pretended evils what is the remedy they prescribe?

Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage. That is to say,—in the full enjoyment of a free press, of the trial by jury, of the Habeas Corpus Act, the right of petitioning and of holding public meetings, though under some restrictions lately introduced (which, as an admirer of your ancient constitution, no one deplores more than myself),—these bold experimentalists would risk all such essential blessings on the very uncertain chance of a national revolution. I say *revolution*, because your ablest writers and most experienced statesmen have proved to demonstration, that the representatives of the Commons were at no period of your history chosen for so short a term as one year, and that the right of naming them was never exercised by the people *at large*.

Such visionary reformers are certainly *Ultras* of the same school with our French *Liberals*; and, like them, are disposed to run every hazard in pursuit of fancied perfection.

Indeed, I meet with but one class of men in this country, who show by their conduct as well as their words, that they fully appreciate the constitution under which they live. I mean that small, but truly respectable, party who are commonly called the Old Whigs. Equally abused by Aristocrats and Demagogues, they count in their ranks no trifling proportion of the ancient nobility and landed property of England; besides which,

many of them are men of the most distinguished ability and most extensive information. Not a few are the immediate descendants of those to whose patriotic exertions you owe all the blessings of the Revolution of 1688. Professing the same sentiments as those of their illustrious ancestors, they have laboured on all occasions to preserve unaltered those popular privileges which are the main springs and noblest characteristics of the British Constitution; and while they have viewed with a jealous eye every attempt to destroy the rights of the people, on the pretext of preserving you from division and revolution, they have, with equal firmness, resisted all those theoretical improvements, which, intended to beautify it, hazard the safety of the venerable pile.

That these real friends of rational freedom should find but few admirers, only proves what has been before observed,—that moderation is no less out of fashion in England than in France; and that the exercise of that virtue is confined in both countries to the wise and good, whose number is no where very large.

But I must now stop.—I have unintentionally been drawn into a political discussion, a subject very foreign from those on which we have agreed to correspond. Yet politics are so connected with your manners, and monopolize so large a

proportion of every conversation which occurs at your tables, that, in taking a view of English society, it is almost impossible to exclude that topic. —Adieu! and be assured of my unchanged and unalterable attachment.

DE VERMONT.

LETTER XVII.

From Sir Charles Darnley, Bart., to the Marquis de Vermont.

MY DEAR DE VERMONT, *Paris.*

THE numerous theatrical exhibitions (or *spectacles* as you call them) which occupy so much of the time of the inhabitants of this gay city, afford also to strangers a never-failing source of variegated amusement. Though the imperfect manner in which the Opera-house is lighted diminishes the splendour of the first *coup d'œil*, while the large bonnets and morning dresses in which your ladies appear on these occasions in the boxes, and the great coats and boots of the gentlemen, present rather unseemly objects to the eye of an Englishman accustomed to the very different attire of the corresponding classes at the theatre in the Haymarket; yet when the spectator directs his eye to the stage, and looks there only for his amusement, he must be fastidious indeed, if not gratified with the performance of one of those classical ballets which are exhibited in the utmost perfection, and accompanied by an orchestra, which, I believe I

may say it without exaggeration, is composed of nearly two hundred musicians. When I complain of the Parisian habit of frequenting such places *en déshabille*,, I must in candour observe, that we are all so governed by early impressions, that my criticism may be solely occasioned by the opposite custom of my own country. I lately dined in company with a Swedish officer, who stated among the inconveniences which, he said, he had experienced in London, that when he wished to go to the Opera, he was compelled to throw off those boots in which he had passed his life, and in which (as he belonged to the cavalry) he was allowed to appear at the Court of his Sovereign. I in vain reminded him that individuals must sacrifice their own inclinations to the advantage of the public, and that certainly a well-dressed audience contributed in no trifling degree to augment the liveliness of a theatrical representation. This was a kind of reasoning which this Northern hero by no means understood; and I found the French ladies and gentlemen, who formed the rest of the society, seemed to think that it would be an intolerable burthen, were they under the necessity, before they appeared in the presence of a crowded audience, to comb their hair, to change their linen, and to throw off the dirty habiliments in which their morning exercise had

been taken. On such subjects, as well as several similar ones, I can only observe, *qu'on ne peut pas disputer sur des sujets de goût.*

Your National Theatre, or *Les François* (as it is commonly called), is the one which I am fondest of attending, because I find there both the most interesting dramatic compositions, and the best performers. You must pardon me for not admiring the pompous tones and violent gestures of your most celebrated tragedians: *La Fond*, *Talma*, and *Mademoiselle Duchesnois*, are certainly performers of no ordinary merit: but in witnessing their exertions I calmly commend, rather than strongly feel, the talent they display. But barbarous as this judgement may sound to your ear, my bad taste may, perhaps, in some degree be pardoned, when I declare, that in *comedy* I commonly give unqualified praise to your performers: while many French plays, particularly those of Molière, are exact representations of real life, "not overstepping the modesty of nature,"—your actors in this line are equally careful, in performing the parts assigned them, not to go beyond the limits which she has prescribed. *Mademoiselle Mars*, though she has now been thirty years on the stage, is still beautiful, and still presents an unrivalled model of dramatic excellence. Many others of the leading performers might be mentioned; but even those to whom the lowest characters are al-

lotted, do such justice to their comparatively trifling share of the general exhibition, that in witnessing the representation of a play thus uniformly well acted, I have experienced the kind of illusion which Dr. Johnson thought impossible—I mean that of fancying myself actually present at an occurrence in real life.

I went a few evenings since to *Les François*, and never do I remember to have been so highly amused. *Le Chevalier à la Mode* was the first piece, in which *Arnaud* pourtrayed the character of a coxcomb of the old school with such happy taste, that, while assuming all the *hauteur* and levity which belonged to the part, he forgot not to display at the same time that elegance and refinement of manner which, in those days, threw a gloss over the most infamous vices; and when he declared, that he had made the purses of his mistresses contribute no less to his pleasures than the harvests of his farmers, he said so with a *grace* which made one, for the moment, admit an excuse both for the depravity of the libertine and the credulity of his victims. But the principal attraction of the evening was *Le Malade Imaginaire*, which succeeded *Le Chevalier à la Mode*, and in which all the best actors were employed. While enjoying this incomparable performance, I could not help remarking and admiring the deep insight into the human heart which Moliere had

obtained. Though this play was written 140 years ago, and in the time which has since elapsed civilization is supposed to have advanced with rapid strides, we find that *quacks*, not only in medicine but in almost every condition of life, are now just as common as they were when this play first appeared; and the satire which it conveys on the folly of mankind is no less applicable to the present, than to the then, state of private society. With regard to the particular foible which he here attacks, I hope you read in one of the English newspapers the account of a trial which lately occurred on one of the circuits, the circumstances of which prove that *Le Malade Imaginaire* is by no means overdrawn. It was an action brought by a country apothecary against the executors of a gentleman, for attendance given, and medicine supplied to the deceased; and the amount of the charge was so excessive, (I think 700*l*.,) though the bill was not of long standing, that his representatives thought it their duty to resist the payment of the account; the particulars of which were accordingly laid before a jury. Among the items, I recollect, there was one for *fifty thousand pills*, sent to the patient on setting out on a journey, with directions for their use. Ten of these he was to take on rising from bed, in order to give him an appetite for his breakfast, as many more by way of assisting his digestion, ten before

dinner, and an equal number afterwards; besides emollients, astringents, sudorifics, diuretics, emetics, febrifuge powders, and aperients of all sorts and descriptions.

Now any person who will examine this bill, which was read in open court, will find it is almost a translation or counterpart of the one, in perusing the articles of which, the hero of *Le Malade Imaginaire* begins that excellent play.

But to return to the performance. I was much amused at the eulogy pronounced by Dr. Diafoirus on his pedantic son, of whom, in allusion to the discovery of the circulation of the blood, which was then recent, he says, "*Mais sur toute chose, ce qui me plait en lui, et en quoi il suit mon exemple, c'est qu'il s'attache aveuglément aux opinions de nos anciens, et qu'il n'a jamais voulu comprendre, ni écouter les raisons et les expériences des prétendues découvertes de notre siècle, touchant la circulation du sang et autres opinions de la même trempe.*"

Now, how many pompous blockheads have we still existing, who boast, like Dr. Diafoirus, that they have educated their children in those prejudices which they themselves had been taught, and in profound contempt of all the discoveries and inventions of the more enlightened age, in which it is the good fortune of the latter to begin their career! It appears also from this passage,

that Dr. Harvey met with quite as much opposition from the ignorance and bigoted obstinacy of his contemporaries, in propagating a truth since universally acknowledged, as our equally illustrious countryman Dr. Jenner experienced in teaching the virtues of a discovery scarcely less important to the interests of humanity.

You are so well acquainted both with the comedy and the actors by whom it was performed, that I will say no more of the merits of either. I cannot dismiss the subject, however, without telling you how much I was delighted with the *divertissement* with which the play was concluded; I mean the representation of the ceremony of receiving M. Argent (*Le Malade Imaginaire*) as a member of the College of Physicians. Though in the exhibition there were some indelicacies rather discordant to our English ideas of propriety, I confess that on the whole I never witnessed a more laughable scene. The stage was fitted up to resemble a medical school, with benches on each side, and two *rostra* were placed in the centre; the higher one being destined for the president, and the lower for the candidate. The ceremony began with a procession of apothecaries and surgeons, each carrying on his shoulder, in lieu of a firelock, *a certain symbol of his profession*, with which these humbler practitioners performed a *military*

salute (for even the sons of Esculapius cannot in France meet without *military* forms), and then seated themselves with becoming modesty on the ground.

To them succeeded a cavalcade of doctors clad in scarlet gowns, who marching two by two, turning round as they approached the pit, and bowing first to the audience and then to each other, at last took their places in solemn state. The whole was perfect in its way; nor was it the least interesting circumstance attending the performance, that all the principal actors and actresses of the theatre were deputed to represent these learned personages: the public therefore enjoyed an opportunity, which they did not neglect, of expressing, as they passed before them in review, the sense they entertained of their respective merits. Many a pretty woman wore on the occasion the solemn garb of science, and Mademoiselle Mars's fine eyes lost none of their lustre from the contrast of her doctor's robes. It is almost needless to add, that that lady engrossed the largest share of popular applause. When the conclave was formed, and the president and the candidates were seated in their pulpits, the examination began, and various questions were suggested with due solemnity by different Members of the College. Dr. Diafoirus, by the importance which he assumed, and the de-

liberation with which he put his interrogatories, was, in my opinion, not the least amusing. But nothing seemed so much to divert the audience as the hesitation of M. Argent, who never ventured to give an answer, till standing up and whispering the president (who sat above him) he had received a friendly hint from *him*,—though, after all this preparation, the replies were nearly the same. The examination, which you know is carried on in a dialect of mixed French and Latin, ran in my head all the night afterwards. I have endeavoured to paraphrase it in English, and I shall now venture to send you my humble attempt.

First Doctor to Candidate. What is the system, learned sir,
Which skill and science should prefer?
How wouldst thou treat cold, bile, or phthisic?
Candidate.—I'd sweat and vomit, bleed and physic.

CHORUS OF DOCTORS.

Well hast thou answer'd. So may we
In solemn conclave grant degree,
And hail thee "brother and M.D."

Second Doctor.—If patient break his arm or head?
Candidate.—He should be sweated, dosed, and bled.

CHORUS.

Well, hast thou answer'd. So may we
In solemn conclave grant degree,
And hail thee "brother and M.D."

Third Doctor.—How wouldst thou treat a fever'd brain?
Candidate.—I'd physic, bleed, and bleed again.

CHORUS.

Well hast thou answer'd. So may we
In solemn conclave grant degree,
And hail thee "brother and M.D."

Fourth Doctor.—How conquer measles or small-pox?
Candidate.—By lancet, syringe, and pill-box.

CHORUS.

Well hast thou answer'd. So may we
In solemn conclave grant degree,
And hail thee "brother and M.D."

Fifth Doctor.—How ease the pangs of torturing gout?
Candidate.—By a like process, rout 'em out.

CHORUS.

Well hast thou answer'd. So may we
In solemn conclave grant degree,
And hail thee "brother and M.D."

Sixth Doctor.—How cure a cancer, or consumption?
Candidate.—Might I opine, without presumption,
I'd say, The ills which now you name
Should all be treated just the same.

CHORUS.

Well hast thou answer'd. So may we
In solemn conclave grant degree,
And hail thee "brother and M.D."

Seventh Doctor.—Should a young girl grow pale and thin,
What wouldst thou order?
Candidate.—I'd begin
By sweating, dosing, bleeding well.

Eighth Doctor.—But should these fail to cure the belle?'
Candidate.—I'd bid her, without loss of time
To seek for health at Hymen's shrine.

CHORUS.

Well hast thou answer'd. So may we
In solemn conclave grant degree,
And hail thee "brother and M.D."

At the conclusion of this notable examination I was much amused by the form of the oath taken by the candidate, by which he pledges himself not only to obey all the laws and ordinances of the College, but even to let his patients die, rather than administer to them any medicine not sanctioned by ancient usage, or authorized by the *fiat* of his brotherhood. As soon as M. Argent, in pronouncing the word "*Juro*," had assented to these *becoming* engagements so read to him by the president, he received from the latter the doctor's bonnet, with license to vomit, physic, blister, cut, mangle and kill with impunity. *A propos*, I find it mentioned in the life of Moliere prefixed to his works, that the author himself performed the part of *Le Malade Imaginaire*; and on the third representation of his incomparable play, just as he had said "*Juro*," he was seized with a convulsive fit, and having broken a blood vessel, was removed from the stage to his own house, where a few minutes afterwards he expired. I find this melancholy occurrence took place on the 17th

February, 1673, when he had only just attained his fifty-third year.

For saying so much to you on a subject with which you are familiar, I have but one apology to offer,—that you have more than once desired me to state without disguise the result of my first impressions; and certainly few things have pleased me more, since my arrival at Paris, than the performance which I have made the subject of the present letter.

Adieu!

CHARLES DARNLEY.

LETTER XVIII.

From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley, Bart.

MY DEAR DARNLEY, *London.*

YOUR last letter has given me much satisfaction, because by the observations made in it I perceive that you begin to derive amusement from our theatrical exhibitions, and they form so material a part of the pleasures of Paris, that till a taste for them is acquired, a stranger cannot properly appreciate the French capital. With regard to your criticisms, I must be permitted to remark that the faults of which you complain (if they deserve that name) are solely occasioned by the difference which exists between *your* manners and *ours*. When your countrymen go to the play or opera-house, they go thither

"To see and to be seen,"

precisely as they frequent Hyde-park or Bond-street in the morning; and the attractions of the drama would be powerless without that additional stimulus.

We, on the contrary, look alone to the stage for our amusement, and neither desire to make a dis-

play ourselves, nor to derive any pleasure from the appearance, however splendid, of those around us.

Consuming a much less portion of time at table than the English, dining very frequently at home, or in unceremonious parties at the houses of our relations, or intimate friends, we should find it highly inconvenient to be under the necessity of altering our dress before we adjourned to one of the many theatres which are opened every night at Paris. It happens frequently, while taking an afternoon's walk in the Thuilleries or the Boulevard, or in paying a visit at the hotel of an acquaintance, that a proposal is suddenly made to go and see the performance of some favourite actor or actress, whose appearance is announced for that evening. The motion meets with general approbation, the family carriage or a hackney coach is ordered, and a whole company soon find themselves enjoying a dramatic treat, of which no one had indulged a thought ten minutes before. Now if the etiquette of *making a toilet* (to adopt our phrase) were indispensably necessary, such impromptu arrangements (which constitute a material ingredient in the pleasures of a Parisian life) would no longer be possible. With respect to the want of light, our ladies deem an excessive glare unfavourable to beauty; and we think, by keeping the rest of the house in comparative darkness, that an additional splendour is thrown on *the stage.*

The tastes of nations on such subjects differ no less than the tastes of individuals, and such variations should make us very careful before we condemn in a foreign country that to which we have been unaccustomed at home; for it by no means follows, because a habit is the reverse of our own, that it is an improper one. If I may be permitted to return to the subject of your Opera-house, I should observe that females of character and consideration have not the means of habitually frequenting that theatre, unless rich enough to command a yearly seat in one of those boxes, the acquisition of which is no trifling object of ambition in the eyes of the vain. But as your lords and ladies, in spite of all their haughtiness and boasted wealth, condescend to traffic in such possessions, and deign occasionally to let them at a price of exorbitant profit, it happens now and then that a party from the city or the country is enabled, by a temporary sacrifice, to enjoy for a few hours the envied pleasure and *éclat* of occupying these privileged places. Still, as they cannot be obtained without some previous arrangement, ample time is found for preparing and putting on those articles of fashionable attire, which if your women had not the opportunity of displaying on such occasions, even an opera box would lose all its attractions.

The necessity, therefore, of appearing no less

dressed at the theatre in the Haymarket than at Almack's, or at an assembly of fashion, acts with these ladies rather as a stimulant than as a preventive.

Let me too remark *en passant*, that it happens oddly enough that *we*, who really have a taste for the drama, call all places where scenic representations are performed *des spectacles*, (which word would strictly imply that we considered them as shows, or exhibitions,) while *you*, who principally value them on the latter account, in speaking of them use no similar expression.

It seems very strange to me, that though you are so very punctilious in enforcing a particular style of costume at the Opera-house, you still suffer the greatest violations of good manners there to pass unpunished. At the time when all that is good, great, or respectable in England may be seen in the boxes, the most abandoned females appear in the adjoining pit; and your young men of distinction make no scruple in paying attention to the latter in the presence, and almost in the hearing, of their mothers and sisters. Indeed, nothing can be more common than to see the same person, five minutes after whispering in the ear of one of those less cruel fair ones, approach the box of a woman of rank and reputation, and receive as cordial a welcome as if he had committed no such impropriety. Indeed, accustomed

as I have been to consider England as the most moral of nations, it seems to me extraordinary that your ladies should tolerate a kind of behaviour which in every other country would banish the persons who had been guilty of it from all circles of decent society.

As after disapproving of any of your usages it always gives me pleasure to be able to commend, I must acknowledge that the whole universe offers not a more splendid *coup d'œil* than the Italian Opera-house in London presents on a Saturday night. The beauty of the theatre, the richness of its decorations, the loveliness of the women, the variety and brilliancy of their dress and jewels, the blaze of light, and the number of distinguished characters who are often found in the ranks of the audience; the general appearance of wealth and prosperity; and the total absence of all features of an opposite kind, form altogether such a picture of gaiety and magnificence as is indeed unrivalled. It was my good fortune to be present a few evenings since, when, in honour of His Majesty's presence, "God save the King" was called for. Never shall I forget the splendour of the sight, or the enthusiasm which displayed itself in the audience, when, at the commencement of that national song, the ladies wearing feathers and diamonds rose from their seats, and joined their voices to those of the actors in the performance of the chorus.

All the rank, beauty, talent, and elegance of London seemed to be concentrated there; and that heart must be cold indeed, which could witness unmoved such a general burst of ardent loyalty.

Your play-houses of Covent-Garden and Drury-Lane are fine edifices; but I am sure you must join with me in regretting that, instead of those two colossal buildings, large enough to hold a little world, you have not several smaller but more convenient theatres. The preposterous dimensions of your present ones are attended by several bad consequences. In the first place, it is next to impossible for the spectator to see at such a distance those nice variations in the countenances of the performers, which constitute one of the principal charms of dramatic excellence; and in the second, it is equally difficult to hear what is said on the stage, with sufficient accuracy to enable the audience to enjoy the quick repartee of an animated dialogue. The best written plays, therefore, lose half their powers of pleasing; and, in spite of the wit of Sheridan, I doubt much whether, if The School for Scandal had lately been acted for the first time on one of these boards, it would have succeeded. This is the real cause of your drama having sunk to so low an ebb, at the very moment when in all other walks of literature England has been taking such rapid strides. The fact is, as your great moralist and critic (Dr. John-

son) has observed, that "as those who live to please, must please to live," the writers of the present day perceive that nothing animates the stagnant attention of the immense crowds which these theatres now contain, but broad farce, splendid processions, or eloquent appeals to the best feelings of the human heart,—appeals which, it is but doing justice to this country to add, are never made in vain. Instead, therefore, of endeavouring to sketch real characters such as nature produces, and Shakspeare pourtrays, modern dramatists either try to force a smile by drawing caricatures which by their novelty or absurdity may challenge attention, to charm the eye with military parade, funeral pomp, and variegated scenery, or to move a tear by a pathetic but often exaggerated tale of sentimental sorrow. These compositions, however successfully performed on the stage, are seldom read with pleasure in the closet.

Nor is this the only inconvenience occasioned by the excessive size of your theatres; in the vast multitudes which they contain, vice finds a never-failing shelter; and while robberies are nightly committed on the persons of the spectators, these nominal places of rational amusement are made the common rendezvous of wantonness and profligacy. The lobbies, tea-rooms, passages and stair-cases, as well as the rows of the upper boxes, are filled with the most abandoned women, who

neither in their dress nor manner seem to attempt disguising the profession which they come thither to exercise. It is therefore impossible for a female to pass an evening at Covent-garden or Drury-lane, without seeing or hearing much that is offensive to the eye and ear of modesty. I think you will allow that we manage these things much better in France, and that nothing can be more decorous than the conduct of all classes at our larger theatres.

Among the many-coloured characters which frequent your play-houses, I am told that drunken men are still occasionally seen, but much less frequently than they were a few years ago, when Bacchanalian excesses were more common in London; I am told that at that time few evenings passed without a theatrical quarrel, which ended in a duel on the following morning. Indeed, I have heard the names of several gallant men mentioned, who, after distinguishing themselves in the battles of their country abroad, returned home to lose their lives in ignoble combats, occasioned by altercations of this kind, with persons in a state of inebriety, whose insults they were forced to resist.

The necessity, too, of letting the hour at which the play begins be regulated by the habits of the greater number of those who reside in this over-grown capital, prevents the national theatres

being places of convenient resort to the higher ranks, who consequently frequent them but rarely; and as, when they do so, they either dispense with dinner altogether, or take that meal at a much earlier part of the day than usual, attending the theatre materially interferes with all their other arrangements. Now, if instead of two great play-houses you had a small one in every district, most of the inconveniencies which I have enumerated would be avoided.

I cannot drop the subject without saying, that going to a play in this town is accompanied by so many sacrifices, that, to use our French phrase, *le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle*; and those dramatic amusements which in every other capital of Europe afford a daily resource to the rich and idle, can scarcely be counted among the pleasures of London.

I remain ever yours,

DE VERMONT.

LETTER XIX.

From Sir Charles Darnley, Bart. to the Marquis de Vermont.

Paris.

MY DEAR DE VERMONT,

IT grieves me to observe, that the spirit which this country has suffered from the tyranny of a military Government, the taste of the people is unaltered, and that dreams of warlike glory still haunt their imaginations. Apathy and indifference prevail universally on all other topics; but whenever, either in public or in private, the smallest allusion is made to the heroic days of victorious France, the right chord is touched, joy sparkles in every countenance, party distinctions are forgotten, and the enthusiasm becomes general. Scarcely a day has passed away since my arrival at Paris, without affording me some fresh proof of this characteristic trait. The old *noblesse*, though indignant if a foreigner speaks with the smallest respect of the genius of Buonaparte, or the talents of his Marshals, will yet condescend, when boasting of the valour of their country, to mention the achievements of both, as demonstrating that under every change of government the

French soldier is invincible. If any one hint that the battle of Waterloo, to which the present King owes his restoration, contradicts the assertion, they contend that the misfortunes of that hard-fought day were all occasioned by the rashness of the commander, and the overwhelming force opposed to him.

The most inveterate enemy of the Bourbon dynasty is equally careful in counting up the heroes of his beloved country, not to omit the names of the Chevalier Bayard, Henry IV., or Marshal Turenne; and their glories are no less considered as national, than those of Pichegru, Dumourier, Ney, or Napoléon.

Among various other instances of the unabated passion for military fame which I have remarked, I shall mention what occurred a few evenings since, at the opening of M. Le Compte's new Theatre in the *Rue Mont Thabor*, when I happened to be present. The entertainment consisted of dramatic scenes represented by machinery, affording what you call *des Tableaux Parlants*. While the inventor confined himself to exhibitions of his skill, however ingenious, which had no allusion to France or military fame, his efforts to amuse the spectators were received with chilling indifference; but when at last he brought before them *Les François au Champ de Mars*, every eye was fixed in mute attention, and every voice

was raised to greet with loud applause a scene so flattering to the vanity of the nation. They availed themselves of the first opportunity which occurred of testifying their approbation; and it was one which showed how much all considerations, including even a respect for religion, are undervalued when put in opposition to "desert in arms."

A French soldier, fully accoutred, approaches the cave of a magician, and begs to borrow a candle, which is brought by the devil in *propriâ personâ*; and *le brave militaire*, unawed by the sudden appearance of his *Satanic* majesty, lights his pipe, with becoming *sang-froid*, at the offered taper, while thunders of enthusiastic applause burst from the well-pleased crowds assembled on the occasion.

Figures of various heroes, beginning with *Henri IV.*, were then brought forward. They were next individually put in motion, and made to march by the delighted audience in military array. All of these received in turn some loud testimony of approbation; but when at length the soldier, who so fearlessly had lighted his pipe at the candle of the devil, exclaimed, *Le souvenir de la gloire passée, est la promesse de la gloire à venir*, no language can describe the ardour with which a sentiment, so calculated to raise the drooping spirits of the French, was received.

From this scene, and from many similar ones which I have witnessed during my stay in this capital, I am disposed to conclude that nothing is still so dear to the heart of a Frenchman as military fame. Nor does this ruling passion seem to have been at all subdued, either by the iron despotism of Buonaparte, the domestic miseries which the Law of Conscription so generally diffused, the tremendous and wide-spread havoc of the fatal retreat from Moscow, or by the mortifications and sufferings which ended with the last occupation of Paris. Indeed, I am assured that one great cause of the uniform success, which so long crowned the arms of France, was the prevalence of this feeling in the breast of all those who joined the warlike bands, and which neither party prejudices, nor private sufferings, were strong enough to eradicate or even to diminish. A lady of the ultra-royalist school tells me, that when a favourite servant was compelled to change her service for that of his country, he was at first very violent, and swore that, though he might be forced to carry a musket, no human power should compel him to level it against those who were engaged in what he and his employers called *la bonne cause*. It happened, however, that he no sooner put on his uniform than he forgot all such angry professions,

and behaved himself with peculiar valour in the field.

When he returned in triumph to his native village his former mistress asked how he could reconcile his behaviour with his principles. "Ah! *Madame*," exclaimed he, "*il faut me pardonner, le François est toujours François, et quand il se trouve devant l'ennemi il n'y a qu'un parti à prendre; il faut vaincre ou mourir.*"

Such was the usual mode of reasoning among all classes of this warlike people, not only in the lowest but also in the highest ranks of society; and the names of many young men have been mentioned to me of your most illustrious houses, who are now *officiers à demi-solde*, and still firmly attached to the cause of Buonaparte; they were at first, like the poor *valet de chambre* whom I just mentioned, torn from their homes by the tyrannical law, which obliged every man to become a soldier in his turn at a particular age. Drawn perhaps in chains to the army, and forced to join the ranks of their countrymen, they by degrees contracted military habits and military sentiments. From privates, becoming subalterns; and from subalterns, officers of distinguished rank; by and by they lost all their early predilections, and ended in being completely identified with the fame and fortunes of the once mighty Emperor.

To conquer this military spirit seems to be not the least of the difficult tasks which Louis XVIII. has to perform. Though nothing would make his majesty so popular among his subjects in general as a declaration of war, he knows very well, that if he attempted to gratify this wish of mortified national vanity, it would probably end, not only in his own ruin, but in the dismemberment of his still extensive empire*.

Were he to change his course, one of two things seems inevitable:—either the allied Sovereigns, marching for the third time to Paris, would lay waste this beautiful capital, and divide amongst them the unhappy country, or the general whom he employed, crowned with victory, and supplanting him in the affections of his people, would soon become another Napoleon; France would be again exposed to military despotism, and the rest of Europe run the risk of sharing a similar fate? From either of these evils, both as an Englishman and a citizen of the world, I must say, "the Lord defend us!"

Though I reluctantly introduce the subject of politics in our correspondence, I could not help

* Written during the administration of M. de Cazes.—Little did the author then anticipate that that favourite minister was soon to be changed for one of directly opposite opinions, and that the latter would advise his sovereign to commence the most unjust of all wars, and perhaps the only war which would have been unpopular in France.

mentioning a circumstance which constitutes so striking a feature in the character of your countrymen. I will not, however, allow even *la gloire Françoise* to tempt me to lengthen this letter: so adieu!

And believe me ever yours,

C. DARNLEY.

LETTER XX.

From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley, Bart.

MY DEAR DARNLEY, *London.*

YES, you are quite right—military glory is the prevailing passion of every Frenchman's breast; but though this passion may occasionally lead us into unpardonable excesses, and may have been the principal cause of all our late public calamities, recollect that we owe to it also many of the best *traits* in our national character. Not to speak of the achievements of our illustrious countrymen, which fill so proud a page in the annals of Europe, the urbanity of manner which pervades all classes of the people; the high spirit which they have displayed on every occasion, and a certain generosity of sentiment which is seldom separated from real valour, may all be traced to this predominating impulse. The jealousy of a standing army, which the particular principles of your constitution and the general love of freedom alike inspire, has prevented the English from being actuated by a similar feeling. But if the desire of mili-

tary fame animate but a small portion of the inhabitants of Britain; the love of country supplies its place in the breast of all: whenever the honour of the united empire is really (or imagined to be) concerned, every purse is opened, and every hand is raised in its defence. Indeed, so very warmly and so unanimously do you think on these subjects, that it is extremely easy for any minister, by a pretended tale of asserted insult, to rouse you into foreign hostility, however unwise, unnecessary, or contrary to your real interests, such a step may be.

Though towards their conclusion, both the first American and the two last French wars became unpopular, it is quite certain, that in the commencement of each the people fully concurred in the course taken by the Government; and, in spite of all the declamation against the corruption of Parliament, had your representatives been the freest in the world, I suspect the minister would have equally received their support; for the feelings of the nation had been excited, and once excited, you become no less enthusiastic than ourselves; and in this enthusiasm the commonest English peasant bears his share no less than the proudest peer. Indeed, nothing delights me more than to witness the anxiety with which the daily newspaper (the welcome visitor of *John Bull's* breakfast-table) is expected by all the inhabitants

of this overgrown city; from the Duke in Grosvenor-square to the cobler in St. Giles's.

By the interest with which I find every particle of news is discussed, even at a time of profound peace, I easily conjecture with what trembling anxiety political intelligence must have been looked for when you and we were struggling for the empire of the world. Are we not then disputing about words? The Frenchman is always ready to draw his sword, when he sees, or fancies that he sees, an opportunity of increasing the military renown of his beloved country; and the Briton is no less zealous to revenge the supposed wrongs, or supposed insults, of that England whose interests and credit seem as dear to its inhabitants as their own private ones. So strongly indeed do all classes identify themselves with the public, that I am persuaded no veteran of Buonaparte's body-guard ever boasted more vainly of the victories of Jena, Marengo, Fleurus, or Austerlitz, to which he personally contributed, than does the London tradesman at this moment, who never carried a firelock in his life, of the battle of Waterloo. In every district of London I find Waterloo street, Waterloo hotels, Waterloo academies, Waterloo pot-houses, Waterloo eating-houses, and Waterloo shops of all orders and descriptions; while your ladies still wear Waterloo bonnets, and

your gentlemen Wellington boots; and I am assured that in the most distant parts of England these favourite names are repeated again and again in every city, town, and village; nay, even your stage coaches borrow a military name from this event, and more than one public vehicle is called *The Waterloo.* This seems an odd application of the term; for if, instead of standing their ground so firmly, your soldiers had run away with half the rapidity with which these carriages perform their daily journeys, you would have had little reason to be fond of the name of Waterloo. Now with respect to another fault, of which I know that your countrymen take delight in accusing mine, I mean *national vanity;* unless I am much mistaken, the weakness is common to both nations. A Frenchman, indeed, makes no secret in avowing his sentiments; and, whenever the subject is started, he tells you that France is superior to all the world in natural and acquired advantages, and that Paris is the centre of every excellence.

Your orators, on public occasions, are no less explicit in claiming for England a similar pre-eminence; and if we are to believe *their* assertions, in arms, science, laws, literature, constitution, morals, and religion, England is without a rival. In private society your countrymen, I confess, are more discreet or more polite; and

a well-bred Englishman is rarely heard, in the presence of a foreigner, to use such offensive language.

But though a stranger is not told that England is the first country in the world, he must be stupid indeed, not to discover that such is the opinion of two-thirds of its natives; while no opportunity is lost of drawing from the traveller a confession, that something, or every thing, which he meets with *here*, is superior to that to which he has been accustomed at *home*.

Of this mode of *challenging* applause I find daily examples, and I remark it amongst all orders of Englishmen. If I commend the rapid pace of your horses, or the neat appointment of your carriages, some member of *the Four-in-hand Club* immediately says, "Ah! Sir, this is the country for *cattle*. Did you see my *team* last Sunday in the Park? I'll bet you ten to one you do not find a match in all France for my *greys*."

If the beauty of a lovely female draws from me a tribute of merited praise, I am asked whether I do not think the English ladies the prettiest of their sex? and perhaps the question is put in the presence of some of them, when to hesitate in giving a reply would be the acme of rudeness.

If I admire the picturesque beauty of the surrounding country when paying a visit at the seat of a friend, an eulogium is immediately pro-

nounced on the rural charms of England; and either the master of the house, or one of his guests, fails not to contrast your elegant villas with our dilapidated chateaux. If, in going into a shop, I commend the manner in which any article is finished, the owner is sure to observe that manufactures are carried to the greatest perfection in Great Britain, and will probably conclude his remarks by asking, in an incredulous tone of voice, whether it would be possible, at any price, to purchase similar goods in France.

If, while reading a number of the Edinburgh or Quarterly Review, I speak favourably of an article which fixes my attention, a partisan of the commended journal (for I find even literary criticism here cannot be separated from party predilections) inquires if I do not think the work in question a periodical publication of *unrivalled* merit; and if I hint that the *Mercure de France* is a competitor which it is difficult to surpass, I am accused of being blinded by national prejudice.

If the Elgin Marbles, the Young Memnon, and the other treasures of the British Museum, are spoken of with merited respect, I am called upon to declare whether we have any thing left at Paris at all comparable to this justly celebrated collection; and if I hint, that the two Galleries of the Louvre, as lately restored by Louis XVIII., and

the *Jardin des Plantes* contain, amongst their various specimens of art and nature, much which, perhaps, the connoisseur would find no less interesting, I find scarcely any Englishman disposed to believe that I am only saying what I think.

If I praise the eloquence of your Parliamentary Speakers, I am reminded that it is only in England that extemporary harangues are heard; and that such efforts alone deserve the name of oratory; while some surprise is expressed at our having suffered the members of our *Corps Législatif* in France to read their discourses.

If, in paying the amount of a long bill at an inn or tavern, I complain of the charges, while in every other respect I allow that I have reason to be satisfied with the treatment received from mine host, he consoles me by saying, as he pockets my money, that the accommodations at similar establishments in England are so superior to those in France that I cannot form an idea of the capital risked, or the value of the conveniences which I have enjoyed; and, indeed, that his profits are, considering all things, extremely moderate. Such is the language of all classes in this country; English farmers, English artists, and English mechanics, are equally confident of their respective merits. They are fond, on all occasions, of draw-

ing a comparison between *their* mode of exercising professions to which they belong, and that in which it is supposed to be carried on by their continental competitors; and I need scarcely add where the preference is given.

Now accuse me not of illiberality or ill-humour in making these remarks; my object in calling such circumstances to your recollection, is to show that your countrymen are not less vain than their neighbours, though I am far from thinking that either nation would be better or happier if the epithet were not applicable.

As it often happens in the case of individuals, that the fancied possession of some virtue or talent leads those who indulge this agreeable dream to acquire the merit they affect; so those countries whose inhabitants are proudest of their imaginary pre-eminence, and zealously labour to procure for their parent soil the praises of mankind, become by degrees the theatre of real excellence. I shall conclude by expressing a wish, in which I am sure you will cordially join, that as England and France, during a long succession of many centuries, wasted their treasures and their blood in a silly and wicked contest for military superiority, so may the only struggle from henceforth between them be to rival each other in the acquisition of useful knowledge, and of those purer morals which

are the fore-runners of peace and freedom, and consequently of the improved happiness of mankind.

Adieu! Ever yours,

DE VERMONT.

LETTER XXI.

From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.

MY DEAR MARQUIS, *Paris.*

THOUGH in the expectation which I had formed of the supposed prevalence of general gaiety in private society I have been much disappointed, I find myself indemnified by the cheerful appearance of the streets of Paris.

The festivities of your church are again kept as *fêtes*, and the very name of a *fête* seems quite sufficient to rouse the native vivacity of the French into all its wonted exuberance. The first occasion on which I witnessed one of these scenes of national hilarity was on the arrival of the *Jour de l'An*, or, as we call it, New Year's Day. In England, children, tradesmen's boys, watchmen, postmen, and milkmen, under the name of Christmas-box (a name derived from the box, which in ancient times was carried round at this season to collect the contributions of the affluent for the relief of the poor), exact from us an annual oblation: so in France, I am told, persons of every description make a practice to begin the year with making presents to all those to whom they are at-

tached by the ties of blood, or by those of friendship; while such marks of good-will are often extended to the commonest acquaintance.

I arrived here not long before the 1st of January, and on the morning of that day a gentle tap at the door of the room in which I was dressing drew my attention, and when I desired the person who knocked to walk in, I was surprised by an unexpected visit from the young and pretty daughter of my landlord, who was elegantly dressed on the occasion, and carried in her hand a nosegay formed of such few flowers as could be collected at that season; of which, *avec toute la grace françoise*, she requested my acceptance as her *etreine*, or New Year's Gift. When I went into the streets, I found all the shops in this great city, and more particularly those in the *Palais Royal*, decked out in a rich variety of showy merchandize, while crowds were thronging into them, in order to supply themselves with the presents expected by their respective friends, for this is an indispensable duty; and, if nothing better can be afforded, a plate of oranges, or a box of *bons-bons*, testifies the good wishes of those whose circumstances are such as to prevent their making a more costly offering. The milliners on this occasion displayed all the whims and novelties of the prevailing fashions, and their counters were covered with laces and silks, as well as with gold

and silver issues, tastefully arranged and recommended to the attention of their visiters. The jewellers, goldsmiths, and watchmakers, exhibited every possible specimen of expensive trinket and ingenious machinery. In the glass-shops were seen the most beautiful proofs of the perfection to which the manufactory has lately been brought in France; and in one of these *depôts* I observed, among other curiosities, a flight of stairs, every part of which was made of that brittle material. The pastry-cooks, who apparently had more custom than any of their neighbours, offered an ample choice of cakes in every possible shape, and a still greater abundance of sugar-plums, containing printed mottos, devices and appropriate verses. The purchasers and spectators formed, *themselves*, no trifling addition to this lively scene; and while the whole town appeared to be pouring out its population in all directions, the *Palais Royal* continued, from the dawn of day till a late hour at night, to be so thronged with persons of both sexes, and of all ages, conditions, and nations of the earth, that it was a task of extreme difficulty to make one's way through the motley multitude there assembled. Some came to make *bonâ fide* purchases; some were seeking adventures; some were watching for an opportunity of picking the pockets of their richer neighbours; some were viewing with an envious eye those tempting bau-

bles which they could not afford to purchase; and all were busily employed. In the evening, the *ci-devant Théâtre des Variétés*, now converted into a coffee-house and splendidly lighted, was thrown open to the public; while a theatrical exhibition was presented on the stage for the amusement of the constantly increasing crowds, who came thither to finish their day. They were seated in different parts of the room, taking tea, coffee, ices, lemonade, and punch; and formed the most picturesque groups imaginable.

A different kind of ceremony was observed on the 21st of the same month (January), when in expiation of the murder of Louis XVI.° (of which this day is the anniversary) a solemn mass was performed for the repose of his soul, and other religious rites, at the cathedral church of St. Denys. The members of the Royal Family all attended on the occasion, and I saw them go by in great state, filling two carriages, each drawn by six horses, and escorted by a detachment of cavalry. They were followed by several private equipages, all with four horses, and attended by servants in court liveries. I cannot think that your Government displays its accustomed prudence in thus recalling to the mind of the people, that the death of Louis XVI. still rankles in the mind of his surviving relatives. The Parisians even on such an occasion could not restrain their propensity to in-

dulgé in *baddinage*, and it was said, in allusion to this ceremony, "*Autrefois on jouoit les* EAUX *à St. Cloud, à présent on joue les os à St. Denys.*"

On *Mardi-gras* (or, as we call it, Shrove Tuesday) that holiday was kept in a livelier manner. All Paris was in motion at an early hour; the streets and public walks, and particularly the *Boulevards*, were crowded with pedestrians, equestrians, and persons in equipages of every sort and kind, from the smart English barouche to the old country cabriolet. Masks were permitted by the police to be worn on this day, and many of the mob availed themselves of the privilege by assuming various characters. Among harlequins, columbines, mountebanks, lawyers, sailors, &c. &c. a fellow, dressed as an English *aid-de-camp*, made his appearance, riding on the neck of a half-starved horse, and wearing a blue great coat, with a red sash, and a low cocked hat and feather, over which he held an umbrella suspended; he was followed by another mask also on horseback, who personated an English groom. I am grieved to say, that nothing seemed to please the crowds so much as these caricatures of the British; and this is not the first time that I have had occasion to remark, with regret, how greedily your countrymen seize every opportunity of attempting to throw ridicule on the family of *John Bull*; it though must be confessed, that in the immense numbers of

idle wanderers from our shores, not a few afford ample materials for the pencil of your caricaturists. So prodigious were the multitudes which this sight had attracted, that all the vigilance of the police proved insufficient to prevent the occurrence of serious accidents; and I saw an unfortunate boy (who had been either trampled on by the crowd or run over by a carriage) conveyed senseless on a hurdle to the hospital. Finding that, on a moderate calculation, half the inhabitants of Paris had come abroad to view the show, I imagined that what they came to see must be splendid indeed; and my expectations were increased by hearing on all sides "*Avez vous vu le beuf-gras?*" while he who could answer the question in the affirmative, seemed to become a person of no little importance, and to be considered as an object of envy. Much therefore was I disappointed, when, after waiting for some hours in the *Place Vendome*, I saw the procession pass through that fine square. It began with a party of *gens d'armes* on horseback, (for I find nothing can be done here without the presence of the military,) and they were followed by a band of musicians clad in fantastic dresses, who, as they marched along, played the popular air of "*Vive Henri IV.*" Then came a corps of ancient warriors, wearing coats of mail and helmets of classical form. A man on horseback next presented himself, carrying in his arms a boy,

habited as Cupid appears on the stage of the Opera-house, and, lastly, the long expected *beuf gras* or fatted ox; his horns were gilt, and he was led by four men, each of whom wore the costume of a Hercules, and carried in his hand a colossal club. On the back of the ox, and reclining on a velvet cushion, sat a young child, and a second detachment of soldiers completed the cavalcade. I cannot even conjecture what this ceremony is meant to represent; though I suppose it is of heathen origin. And, if so, it is not the least curious part of the business that it should be revived in the 19th century, and on one of the festivals of the Catholic Church.

However absurd it may appear in the judgement of a phlegmatic Englishman, that an exhibition so paltry as the one which I have just described should bring together so large a proportion of the citizens of this great city, I must confess that if it is wise to lose no opportunity, however trifling, of making ourselves innocently happy, and if the merry faces which I met in such vast numbers on this occasion did not deceive me with false appearances, the Parisians are rather to be envied than censured for being so easily amused. Indeed, one of the best traits in your national character is the facility with which you find agreeable pursuits, and the good sense you display in welcoming pleasure wherever it presents itself, no matter how humble

may be the attire which it assumes. Not only on such periods of peculiar festivity, as those of which I have been speaking, but on Sundays, and indeed on the evenings of every day in the week, when the weather bears a smiling appearance, I meet persons of all ages, and often in family parties, hastening to the *Boulevards*, the *Thuilleries*, or the *Champs Elysés*, and throwing off all recollection of their cares and professional labours, in the interchange of friendly conversation, and the enjoyment of harmless mirth.

At the gardens of *Tivoli*, *Frescati*, and *St. Cloud*, I witness similar scenes; and though I acknowledge that I have sometimes smiled at beholding grave gentlemen and full-grown ladies mounted on rocking-horses, or on those *round-abouts*, which are here not exclusively confined to the diversion of boyhood, but shared by persons of all ages, perhaps my ridicule was ill-timed; for the people of this country are rather to be envied than censured for retaining, even to old age, a passion for hobby-horses; and if we, who presume to look down with an eye of contempt on such amusements, instead of blaming those who indulge in them would condescend to do the same, we should act a wiser part: for certainly it is better to spend a fine evening under the canopy of heaven, however trifling our diversions, than, like our higher ranks, to waste those cheerful hours in a heated

dining-room; or, as the inferior classes of Englishmen are too fond of doing, in drunkenness and gross revelry, amidst the fumes of punch and tobacco, at a public-house.

Adieu!

C. DARNLEY.

LETTER XXII.

From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley, Bart.

MY DEAR DARNLEY, *London.*

PRAISE and censure are so mixed together in your last letter, that it is not quite evident whether the "merry faces" which are said to abound in our Parisian streets on days of festival, please or offend you most. It has been observed, that whenever an expression is addressed to a Frenchman of equivocal meaning, and it is doubtful whether a compliment or a censure is meant to be conveyed, he always puts on it the most agreeable interpretation; I shall do so on this occasion, and conclude that you really think us wise in being amused with trifles. Indeed, so large a proportion of human happiness depends on the enjoyment of "cheap pleasures," that those who retain a taste for them (particularly amidst the corruptions and dissipations of a great city) are rather to be envied, than laughed at or condemned. Viewing the question as one in political economy, there can be no doubt that the observance of frequent holidays is extremely injurious to the in-

dustry, and therefore to the wealth and independence, of the community; on that account I lament that our Government has revived so many of those *fêtes* which the revolution had abolished: but there is a trait in the French character which renders the idleness, which such gay moments occasion, less injurious to my countrymen than to yours; I mean the extreme sobriety of all classes, generally accompanied by a natural cheerfulness of disposition, and early acquired habits of the strictest economy.

When a *Bourgeois* of Paris gives his family and himself a holiday, he only loses the time so devoted to relaxation, while he often redeems its value by greater exertion on the preceding, or following, days. A loaf of bread, a bunch of grapes, a little cold meat, (the relics of a former meal) and a bottle of 10 sous wine, packed up in a light basket, and carried by *la fille*, (his only servant, who accompanies and shares the pleasures of her employer,) afford a delicious repast, after the morning's walk, to the merry little party, seated under the shade of an ancient oak in the *Bois de Boulogne*, or in the Park of *St. Cloud*. And if the master of the family can afford to take his companions in the evening to one of those merry *salons* or public rooms, over the entrance to which appear those words so tempting to a Frenchman's eye, "*Ici on danse*," and where for

a few *sous* they may enjoy for several hours this innocent and favourite amusement, he makes himself and those around him as happy as if he had spent ten *louis* in an expensive entertainment; and returning home by moonlight, well pleased with his day's excursion, he resumes his labours on the following morning with unimpaired health and redoubled spirits. How differently do your good citizens of London conduct themselves on similar occasions! Here the ideas of amusement and expense are inseparable; and it never occurs to an Englishman, whatever his situation in life may be, that he can give himself the slightest gratification without a considerable drain on the contents of his purse.

I lately overheard a mechanic conversing in barbarous English with a brother of the same trade, and I noted down the following words: "*I spends as much on a Sunday as I gets on all the days of the week besides.*" Now this speech seems to express very accurately, if not very elegantly, the feelings and habits, not only of the poorer class of people, to which this man belonged, but of many of a higher order. I am assured that journeymen tailors, journeymen shoemakers, and all other persons of similar description, who receive the price of their weekly exertions on a Saturday night, seldom return home to their wives and families till they have wasted a considerable por-

tion of what they had just received, at some neighbouring pot-house: the expense of the Sunday dinner, and concomitant punch or porter, makes another heavy deduction from their little stock; and when the following day appears (which is technically called *St. Monday*), they are too enervated, by the excesses committed in the interval, to return to work. Four-and-twenty hours more are devoted to idleness and barbarous excess; and while scarcely any of them begin their professional labours till Tuesday, not a few postpone their accustomed tasks till the week is far advanced. If holidays are less frequent in London than at Paris, and if at such times your streets assume a less cheerful appearance than ours, I must beg leave to remind you that *exhibitions*, and exhibitions of no very rational kind, have their attractions even in England. Your Lord Mayor's show, with the barges and their flags on the river, and the gilt coaches in the street; the man in armour and the rest of the absurdities of that annual ceremony, collect no less a crowd in this capital than does the *beuf gras* at Paris; and I think you will confess that to the eye of reason the one pageant is just as *interesting* as the other.

The religious rites of Christmas are performed with becoming respect; but the custom of giving on that day a plentiful dinner of roasted beef, plum pudding, and mince pies, accompanied by copious

libations of punch, ale, porter and port wine, is not less generally or less strictly observed.

The *Jour de l'An* at Paris does not bring more people into our shops, of all descriptions, than the morning of Twelfth-day attracts into those of your London pastry-cooks; and so numerous are they, and so ample is the provision of frosted cakes, covered with ornamental figures, that I really believe more money is wasted in the purchase of such indigestible articles, than we spend in procuring those elegant *etrennes*, or new year's gifts, which friends exchange in France, and which often consist of jewellery, china, or lace. Allow me also to remark, that British curiosity on these occasions is fully equal to ours, and that the crowds of idle gazers at the windows of your confectioners on Twelfth-day, are not less numerous than those which you observed in the *Palais Royal* on the 1st of January.

Easter Monday is another festival on which the lower ranks of this great city delight to make holiday; and on which, not satisfied with abstaining from work, they indulge in the most wanton excesses. Besides the indecent scenes exhibited by both sexes in tumbling down Greenwich hill, and the awkward and often dangerous zeal of your citizens in joining the jovial chase on that occasion, when a stag is turned out for their amusement, the public houses of London, and the

numerous inns of its environs, are thronged with riotous parties drinking spirits and smoking tobacco; when, after spending the morning in this manner, they adjourn to one of the theatres in the evening, where, instead of listening to the play, they amuse themselves by interrupting the performance with loud vociferations, by pelting the actors with orange-peel, or by insulting the more respectable part of the audience.

May-day *, which I shall next mention, receives honours of a peculiar kind in England, and again affords an apology for idleness and dissipation. There is such a charm in the appearance of Spring and in the ideas connected with it, that I was not surprised at remarking that on this occasion your countrymen threw off much of the gravity which they commonly mix up with their pleasures. The chimney-sweepers, decked out with pieces of gilt paper, with faded flowers and other fineries of some lady's cast apparel, playing a barbarous tune with their brushes and shovels, and dancing round a portable May-pole, presented indeed a most grotesque appearance in the centre of a civilized capital. Nor did I witness without a considerable

* May-day seems always to have been a period dedicated to gaiety in England. Miss Benger, in her late very interesting Life of Ann Boleyn, tells us, that on May-day it was King Henry the Eighth's pride to rise with the lark, and, with a train of courtiers splendidly attired in white and silver, to hasten to the woods, whence he bore home the fragrant bough in triumph.

degree of interest that singular kind of charitable hospitality, which a lady of great wealth and distinguished literary talent first instituted, and which her son continues to observe: I mean the dinner, *al fresco*, given on the occasion, in a garden attached to one of the most splendid mansions in the British metropolis, to the younger members of that *sooty community*, who are thus allowed to enjoy, once a year, the luxuries of the great.

The smart and self-satisfied appearance of your stage-coachmen pleased me much, when, in entering London, they displayed on their own bosoms, and on the heads of their horses, those numerous nosegays, which the belles of the rustic inns, at which they are in the habit of stopping, make it a practice to present to them on that day. If the morning of Spring was only welcomed in this manner by its proper emblem of beautiful flowers, one should scarcely complain of the idleness which it occasions; but May-day, like every other festival in England, is celebrated not only in the open air, and with innocent pastimes, but also in public houses, amidst smoke, drunkenness, and noisy riot.

The fairs in the neighbourhood of London, particularly that of St. Bartholomew, (which is kept in Smithfield, and consequently in the centre of the commercial part of this great city,) are not only the occasion of lost labour, but likewise of

every possible excess, of every vice, and frequently of bloodshed.

But in addition to the holidays indiscriminately observed by all the natives of Great Britain, I find that the Scotch have their St. Andrew's; the Welsh their St. David's; the Irish their St. Patrick's day; and that every good patriot thinks it necessary, on the return of his national festival, not only to put a thistle, a leek, or a shamrock, in his hat, but also to get drunk in honour of his patron saint. But, besides these appointed periods, I perceive that your people, in spite of all their industry, greedily seize on every opportunity of giving themselves a holiday. On the day kept in honour of the King's birth, loyalty requires that they should cease from labour, and spend some hours at the public house, either in drinking long life to His Majesty, or d——n to his ministers, according to their respective politics.—*À propos*, on the last anniversary I know not which I most admired, the brilliant display of elegant carriages, which conveyed the great and rich to the court of their sovereign, or the equally splendid procession of mail-coaches, drawn by the finest horses in the world, which in the evening paraded St. James's-street.

When the King meets his Parliament, when the anniversary of a battle gained, or a proclamation for a fast in humiliation of your sins, offers an ex-

cuse, your labouring classes throw aside their work, and making their appearance in the street, in the Park, or at the public house, (to repeat the phrase of my friend the mechanic,) "spend twice as much as they get all the week beside." But when no public solemnity occurs, a bull-bait or a boxing-match is quite sufficient to draw half the population of London to one of those barbarous sights; and whenever an Englishman goes abroad, he never thinks of returning till the day is spent and his money exhausted. It grieves me to add that, though bull-baiting and boxing are both forbidden by your laws, means are found of evading them, and that such unchristian sports are not only attended and enjoyed by the lower orders of your people, but often sanctioned by the presence of peers and other persons of importance. I am aware that a distinguished statesman, now dead, who was fond of exercising his great talents in the defence of paradoxes, used to contend that the continuance of pugilism was necessary to the maintenance of your national courage: but all which his ingenuity could prove was, that it is better that two angry Britons should vent their fury in an exchange of blows, than that they should, like the fiery natives of a warmer climate, seek revenge in the cowardly practice of assassination. But surely this negative kind of defence, if allowed at all, cannot justify the custom of en-

couraging, by pecuniary rewards, professional combatants to try their comparative strength in pitched battles, which often end in the loss of life; a custom no less derogatory to the honour of the 19th century, than contrary to the clear precepts of that religion which we all profess.

Let it be remembered also, that it was only in the decline and fall of Rome, that her tyrants taught a servile people to take delight in the effusion of human blood, by exhibiting frequently before them the horrid feats of hireling gladiators.

Your races in general, and particularly those of Epsom and Egham, in consequence of their vicinity to the capital, are in their effects very injurious to your morals. I shall not go the length of saying that there is a want of humanity in teaching the generous horse to exhaust his vigour in overstrained competition, for it seems the nature of that noble animal to feel the love of fame and to struggle for victory; but this diversion, like every other in England, is attended with ruinous expense. While your noblemen and gentry spend vast sums in rearing and training these beautiful but delicate creatures, and are sometimes tempted to risk the full value of a large estate, which has descended to them from a long line of ancestry, on the hazardous achievements of a favourite colt, others, who are not rich enough to keep horses themselves, are still fond of being present on these oc-

casions as spectators; and, after cheating or being cheated on the ground, spend the rest of the day at some of the neighbouring inns in jovial parties, or in gaming at the *E O* tables. In short, I think the English are just as fond of holidays as the French; but while they pay more dearly for them, they enjoy them less. A similar remark is applicable to all the convivial habits of the two countries: with us society is so essential a part of our happiness, that it requires no adventitious charm. We seek it for itself, and are led to the pursuit by no secondary consideration. You accuse us of vanity; yet, in your manner of receiving company, you show that that passion has a much greater influence on you than on us. Indeed, according to the usages of England, it seems that a man has but one alternative,—to live in solitude, or to squander immense sums in giving sumptuous banquets.—Need I tell you how differently we feel and act in these respects? Not only in our *chateaux* and provincial towns, but also in the capital, the proudest noble is not ashamed to see his relations and intimate friends at his *ordinary and frugal* meal; and could you come unseen into the dining-rooms of our finest hotels, you would find many a cheerful party assembled round the social board, though perhaps the only dishes it contains are the usual soup and *bouilli*, a roasted fowl, or a plate of cutlets. Now contrast this fare

with the nominal *family* dinner of a man of small fortune in England, to which he invites those with whom he lives on terms of the closest intimacy. Though he knows they are all acquainted with his circumstances, and are aware how ill he can afford the expense, he loads his table with every costly rarity; while, in doing so, he exposes himself to very serious difficulties, and is perhaps obliged, a few days afterwards, to ask a temporary loan of one of those very guests, in receiving whom so extravagantly he wasted a larger sum than that which he is now compelled to borrow. Nor is this fault confined to the higher classes;—your tradesmen are scarcely less prodigal than your nobility and gentry. Even your mechanics are occasionally forgetful of the golden rules of economy and moderation. Scarcely a shopkeeper is to be found in London, who on a Sunday does not either give a handsome dinner at home, partake of a similar one at a friend's house, or take a country excursion, conveying his wife or his mistress in a gig, for the driving of which one or two horses are regularly kept; while some persons of no higher station, think themselves rich enough to change this humble vehicle for a barouche and four.—Such follies certainly contribute to those frequent bankruptcies which your Gazette announces; but their existence shows how difficult it is for an Englishman to separate his ideas of

pleasure from those of expense. However, lest I should tire you, I will now take my leave. I think I have shown pretty clearly, that if the Parisians spend too much time in the observance of public festivals, they share that weakness with their graver neighbours; who, not content with wasting their hours in this manner, are equally lavish of their health and money.

DE VERMONT.

LETTER XXIII.

From Sir Charles Darnley, Bart., to the Marquis de Vermont.

MY DEAR DE VERMONT, *Paris.*

AS there are few real or fancied tales more tragical than the story of the *Duc d'Enghien*, I determined that I would not leave Paris without visiting the scene of his murder; a murder which, of all Buonaparte's actions, was certainly the blackest and least justifiable. After driving through the *Fauxbourg St. Antoine*, which witnessed so many of the eventful circumstances of your Revolution, I passed the *barrière du Trone*, and at the distance of an English mile from that spot found myself at the gates of the old castle of *Vincennes*, whose solitary position, gothic structure, and moated fortifications, are all in unison with the bloody deed perpetrated within its walls. The sentinel on duty would not permit us to enter the castle by the principal gate, but allowed us to walk round the ramparts to the draw-bridge on the opposite side. In casting my eyes on the ditch, which runs round this extensive edifice, I observed a little to the right of the

draw-bridge some persons busily employed in laying out a small garden, while others were surrounding it with an iron railing, and in the centre of the garden appeared an accumulation of earth of the shape and size of an ordinary grave, but covered with turf. I inquired the reason of these preparations, and learnt with no little interest that this was the identical spot where the gallant and ill-fated *Duc d'Enghien* received his death blow, and under which he was immediately buried. To record the event, Louis XVIII. had ordered these simple memorials to be prepared. After crossing the draw-bridge, we were conducted up the narrow staircase of an ancient tower into a very small and dark room, where, covered with white cloth richly embroidered with golden *fleurs-de-lis*, appeared a coffin containing the bones of the murdered Duke, which bones have lately been removed from the spot in which they were first deposited. On the coffin lay a large stone, which the executioners had thrown over the spot, under which they interred their victim. The chamber containing these things is now converted into a chapel, and the coffin was surrounded with lighted tapers, near which also a sentinel was posted. This is the place where the royal sufferer underwent his mock trial. It appears that as soon as he had acknowledged, in answer to the first interrogatory put to him, that he was the

person sought for, he was condemned without any further formality, conducted into another chamber where he was kept two hours, while a message was sent to the palace of the Thuilleries for the final commands of Napoleon; which were no sooner received than he was led to the spot already described, and shot by torch-light. This infamous act was committed on the 28th of March; and Louis XVIII. has ordered, on the annual return of that day, that a religious expiatory ceremony shall be performed. A person, who was at Paris when the melancholy event occurred, assures me that, in spite of the rigid system of *espionage* which then prevailed, it excited much alarm and some complaint. It was rumoured that a Prince of the Bourbon family had been put to death, but the name of the victim was unknown. My informant was told by a soldier that he had been called upon, with several others, to carry into execution a military sentence, at one o'clock in the morning, at the castle of *Vincennes*; but who the prisoner was, had been carefully concealed. I have heard that the unfortunate Duke was exposed, not only to every possible indignity, but even to great physical suffering;—that after having been hurried to Paris from the banks of the Rhine, without an interval of rest, he was not allowed the smallest refreshment on his arrival within these dismal walls. But this is a refinement of cruelty,

which, for the honour of human nature, I am not disposed on mere rumour to believe.

After viewing the spot where one member of your royal family so miserably ended his short but honourable career, I thought I could not take a better opportunity of visiting the scene of another illustrious victim's sufferings, and therefore proceeded from the castle of *Vincennes* to the prison of the *Conciergerie*. There I found a low, small, damp and dark cell, which has lately been converted into an expiatory chapel, and here the once beautiful, elegant, high-born and high-minded Marie Antoinette, Archduchess of Austria and Queen of France, was confined sixty-seven days, and only left this wretched apartment to ascend the cart which conveyed her to the place of execution. During her long imprisonment she slept on a stone floor, on which a truss of straw was thrown by way of bed. No one who remembers her, who has read an account of her personal and mental charms and regal splendour, or who recollects the beautiful passage in which our eloquent Burke has recorded her claims to compassion, can view this spot with indifference. Perhaps I ought to apologize for troubling you with an account of my visits to these dismal scenes; they do not strictly belong to that view of national manners to which you and I have agreed to confine our remarks; but the *Duc d'En-*

ghien and *Marie Antoinette* are so connected with your Revolution, and your Revolution with every thing which one hears and sees in this country, that I could not help telling you how much I had been affected in viewing the spots which witnessed the sufferings of these ill-fated and illustrious personages. Perhaps Louis XVIII. acts unwisely as a politician, while he indulges an amiable superstition, by raising these expiatory chapels which I have had occasion to mention; yet, as a man, one can understand and pardon the feelings by which he is actuated.

À propos of your Revolution;—much as it has undoubtedly influenced the state of society, I am amused at observing how ready an apology it affords for every fault which a stranger ventures to remark. If I tell an advocate of the ancient *regime*, that your manner of living here appears to me less cheerful than I expected, and that foreigners find it difficult to make their way into the best circles of this city, however respectable they may be, he immediately answers, "O Sir! had you been here before our *infernal* Revolution, you would have had no cause for these complaints; the court was the model of taste, elegance, decorum, and innocent hilarity; and to be *a stranger*, was a passport amply sufficient to secure for the well-born and well-educated traveller the most gracious welcome." Yet, perhaps, the individuals,

of whose incivilities the person to whom he is speaking has had most reason to complain, belong to that very privileged class whose urbanity in former days was the subject of such high commendations. If, too, we turn to Horace Walpole's picture of Paris, drawn fifty years ago, in his admirable letters, we shall find him, even *then*, describing the stiffness and formality of the persons with whom he associated, and all these were members of the old court, which court we are now told was so remarkable for its graceful manners; and his friend Marshal Conway, in whose veins flowed the proudest blood of Britain, complains in the same correspondence, that when he visited Paris, after having been Secretary of State in his own country, he was treated by some of these very nobles with "insulting condescension." The opposite party is no less disposed to throw the blame on the reigning Government. If to a follower of Buonaparte I observe that "his *cher Paris*" does not appear to me that perfect Paradise which the praises of his countrymen had taught me to expect, he exclaims, "You must not judge of the French capital by its *present* state. The return of the Bourbons has been no less destructive to private society than to public happiness. Had you been here during the reign of the Emperor Napoleon, you would have seen splendour without ostentation, gaiety without frivolity, and the most delicate atten-

tion to strangers, united to a simplicity of manner such as only real greatness could assume;—*mais ces Emigrés!*"—and then follows a philippic against that unfortunate race of men, which draws him from his subject, and produces a thousand rhetorical figures with which it is useless to trouble you. In short, every deviation from private decorum, virtue, honour, or urbanity, which occurs in this great city, is attributed to a political cause; and either the Revolution, or the Restoration, bears the blame, according to the prejudices of the speaker. Now, without denying that both these important events must have been felt in the most secret recesses of private society, I should imagine that many vices, many faults, and many follies are daily discovered, which have not the smallest connexion with either of those political æras. Party blinds the eyes of its votaries; and enthusiasts, like madmen, see every thing under false impressions.

But I must now bid you adieu, and assure you, once again, how truly

I am, &c.

CHARLES DARNLEY.

LETTER XXIV.

The Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley.

MY DEAR DARNLEY, *London.*

I FIND by your last letter that you have lately been visiting those interesting but melancholy scenes, which recall the sufferings and deaths of our royal and lamented victims. While you were thus spending your time at Paris, mine was more agreeably employed in viewing the vast and magnificent improvements which the British metropolis now offers to the observation of an admiring world. Indeed, from all the descriptions which I have read of its former state, and from the specimens yet standing of its ancient buildings, I am induced to conclude that the progress made since the signature of the last treaty of peace, in extending and beautifying London, is almost miraculous. Most extraordinary does it, indeed, appear to strangers, that after having maintained, almost exclusively at your own expense, the burden of one of the longest and most expensive wars which Europe ever witnessed, you should at its termination find the means of erecting such numerous and costly piles of elegant architecture; nor can we,

in beholding them, fail to reflect how incalculable are the resources of a free, enlightened, and united people.

One of the first objects which drew my attention was Waterloo Bridge, "in seeing which," observed Canova, (no contemptible authority on such a subject,) "the traveller is amply rewarded for the trouble of a journey from Rome to the English capital." After admiring the lightness and symmetry of this far-famed structure, I lamented, on hearing that a million of your money had been expended in raising it, that so heavy a burden should be thrown on the shoulders of the people; when I learnt to my surprise, that this stupendous work, as well as that of the London and West India Docks, (besides the various canals, by which manufactures and commerce circulate from one end of the kingdom to the other,) were all the unprotected efforts of private speculators.

In France we are so accustomed to see similar enterprises executed by the Government only, that it is with difficulty we are brought to understand how such wonders can be effected by the exertion, and at the hazard, of voluntary associations.

When I extended my researches, and visited the fine theatres of Drury-lane, Covent-Garden, and the Opera-house, and found that they also were private property; and when in pursuing my inquiries I heard that the splendid new street, or

rather the succession of splendid streets, by which Pall Mall communicates with Portland-Place, those which are now erecting on the spot lately occupied by the royal stables, and the several terraces of large and beautiful houses decorated with pillars and pilasters, which front the Regent's Park, not to speak of the many elegant villas dispersed about that fine piece of ground, (equally useful as a place of exercise and as a source of health to the inhabitants of this colossal town,)—I say, when I heard that these buildings, though standing on land belonging to the Crown, and laid out agreeably to a plan sketched by the royal architect, were all raised at the expense of *individuals*, who had also undertaken to pay an annual quit-rent, amply sufficient to remunerate the Government for the sums advanced in making the preparations which preceded these improvements, a new train of ideas was presented to my mind; and I contemplated with equal pleasure and surprise the scene before me, exemplifying so beautifully the mighty powers of accumulated capital, of capital created by industry and trade, under the guardian banners of law and liberty.

The happy effects of your admirable constitution may, indeed, be traced in all we see in England. While every thing on the Continent is growing rather worse than better; while the *cha-*

teaux, which escaped the united evils of war and revolution, are rapidly falling to decay; while our villages are deserted, and our towns dilapidated; England seems, in spite of the complaints of her own politicians, to be rapidly advancing in her proud career of wealth and prosperity.

Indeed, when I first came hither, I was so deceived by the language of several of your newspapers, and by the conversation of those whom I met in society, that I believed you were on the eve of a national bankruptcy; but as I extend my stay, and calmly examine the testimonies of public happiness, which hourly challenge my admiration, I am satisfied, though your agriculture and commerce may at present prove less profitable objects of speculation than such as engaged in these pursuits during the last war were once accustomed to find them, that those evils are but temporary, and that even at this time, when compared to that of the rest of the world, the state of England is most enviable. While the coffers of your merchants are still so overloaded as to afford them the means of offering unlimited loans to supply the necessities of the new, and the extravagancies of the old, governments both in Europe and America; —while the appearance of cleanliness and respectability is so general among the people, that, as I walk about this town, I feel myself constantly disposed to ask, like the Emperor of Russia,

Where are the lower ranks to be found? While your shops are crowded with costly luxuries, and your streets with splendid equipages, how can I entertain a doubt that the welfare of England is not only unimpaired but progressive?

Nor are the manifestations of national prosperity confined within the precincts of this city; for London, differing in that respect from the other capitals in Europe, is the *centre*, not the *drain*, of the riches of the country. I believe there is no part of Great Britain in which the same features may not be traced; and wherever a work of utility is suggested, speculators and money are sure to be found. Business called me a short time since into a distant county. In all the towns and villages through which I travelled improvements were going forwards, houses building, or roads constructing. When I arrived at Derby, I was asked whether I chose to take the new route to Matlock; and having assented from motives of curiosity, to my great surprise I soon witnessed a scene which in romantic beauty, and almost in magnificence, might be compared to that which presents itself in the celebrated passage of the Simplon made by Napoleon. Here, as in the latter great work, for nearly twenty miles, rocks had been excavated, and mountains levelled; and all this achieved, not by the strong arm of a mighty conqueror, and at the expense of a suffering people, but by the spirited

and patriotic exertions of a few private gentlemen, who, while enriching themselves, and conferring an essential service on the public, had also found the means of affording labour and consequent comfort to the surrounding peasantry.

But to return to the metropolis. How greatly is this city indebted to the liberality and industry of its citizens! The splendid specimens of ingenious machinery exhibited in the breweries, distilleries, and other such establishments, I am told are all the property of private men, many of whom have risked half a million of money in one of these gigantic speculations; while even in the lowest walks of retail trade, large capitals are embarked. Nor are the profits of apparently trifling concerns inadequate to the risk incurred; in proof of which I am assured by a gentleman, who for many years held the situation of a commissioner of bankrupts, that, in the execution of his official duty, he had it proved on one occasion before him, on indisputable evidence, that a printer and wholesale vender of those ballads which are dispersed about the town at the price of half a penny each, derived an income of two thousand pounds a year from the produce of his business. After mentioning the vast number of public works in this town, which owe their origin to private speculations, I should be ungrateful not to add, that the patrons of the fine arts, without any such

interested motives, contribute their share to the magnificence of London. Few things are more attractive to strangers than galleries of pictures and statues; and here they belong not to Government, but to individuals. Besides the superb collections of Lords Grosvenor and Stafford, and those of Messrs. Hope and Angerstein, which are so munificently thrown open to the inspection of artists and connoisseurs, the establishment of the British Gallery (to which the proudest nobles in the land, as well as the sovereign himself, condescend to make an annual loan of their choicest works) shows that the possessors of these, *chefs d'œuvres* have bought them for no selfish purposes, and value them only as they contribute to assist the progress of national skill and genius.

When I reflect on the variegated scenes which hourly draw my notice; when I add to my own observations those of others, on whose judgement I can rely; when I gaze on this mighty metropolis, so rapidly augmenting in size and grandeur; when I recollect the high moral and military character which your arms attained in the last war; when, extending my views to literary and scientific subjects, I find that while the Duke of Wellington triumphed in the field, Dr. Jenner and Sir Humphry Davy were immortalizing both themselves and Great Britain by discoveries for which they will receive the blessings of ages yet

unborn; and that Crabbe, Moore, Scott, and Byron, after raising the poetical fame of their country, still live, and still promise to carry higher their own and England's reputation; and that in the fine arts, though much has been done, much more may yet be expected from the pencil of Lawrence, and the chisel of Chantrey;—when I put all these contemporary circumstances together, I am compelled in spite of early prepossessions to acknowledge that you are rapidly approaching the goal of national greatness; and when I remember the great events, the great works, and the great men, which have thrown a lustre yet unfaded on this period of your annals, I can venture to predict, without stopping to inquire whether these advantages are to be attributed to the wisdom of the Government or to the energies of the people, that history will dedicate one of its most interesting, and most brilliant, pages to the regency and reign of George IV.

I remain, my dear Darnley,

Yours sincerely,

De Vermont.

LETTER XXV.

From Sir Charles Darnley, Bart., to the Marquis de Vermont.

MY DEAR MARQUIS, *Paris.*

IT is gratifying to me to learn that, among innumerable follies and absurdities discovered in our manners, you yet find much to commend. I admire also the liberality of your mind, which, rising superior to those national prejudices which have been too much indulged on both sides of the Channel, induces you to observe and to acknowledge the many proofs of progressive improvement which, in spite of financial and agricultural difficulties, England still displays. You are quite right in setting down as a general position, that in Great Britain all great works originate from, and owe their ultimate success to, the spirited exertions of private individuals. Waterloo Bridge, as you have been correctly informed, was begun and completed by an unassisted company of moneyed speculators. By the by, I suppose you have heard the story which is current on that subject. It seems that Canova, after expressing his admiration at the beauty of that stupendous

edifice, next requested to see some similar design executed by the Government of the country, when, to his great surprise, he was shown the little wooden Chinese bridge over the canal in St. James's Park, which, built a few years ago, is already falling to decay. Such is the contrast which private and public undertakings present in England!

Though the buildings which you have admired in the new streets and in the Regent's Park form, strictly speaking, exceptions to the general observation, yet as no minister, particularly of these times, would have ventured to apply to Parliament for the large sums which their construction has drawn from the pockets of the people, unless he had counted on that money being refunded by the persons who were likely to want such houses, it was, in fact, the wealth of the latter which occasioned their being built.

That our King is yet without a palace becoming the sovereign of so great an empire, is a fact which speaks for itself, and shows how powerless on such subjects is the influence of Government. While you bear honourable testimony to the growing magnificence of London, I should be unjust, after viewing Paris, not to offer a like tribute of admiration respecting the improvements made, and making, in this metropolis. At one time the British who flocked hither were so dis-

posed to attribute all meliorations to Bonaparte, that in more than one book of travels published in England he receives credit for erecting buildings which had been constructed many years before his birth by Louis the XIVth.—But, after striking off such items of unmerited praise, it must be allowed that what Napoleon actually achieved here and elsewhere, in the midst of continued wars, is most wonderful. Not to speak of the Bridges of Jena and Austerlitz, the vast additions to the Louvre, the canal *de l'Ourcq, &c. &c.*, I often view with wonder the magnificent column which still rears its towering head in the *Place Vendôme.* I know not what most to admire, the grand thought of using the cannon taken from the Austrians as the materials of a monument commemorative of their defeat, that of copying one of the finest relics of antiquity in the construction of this monument, or the equally happy one of erecting the pillar in the finest square of the Imperial capital. Not less fortunate was his next step, in throwing down the narrow lanes by which, I am told, the *Place Vendôme* was formerly surrounded, and by making it communicate with your two great promenades,—I mean on one side with the Boulevards, and on the other with the garden of the Thuilleries. I find that it was in carrying part of this plan into execution, the wide and handsome *Rue de la Paix* sprang into existence; and

as that street is now filled with hotels and lodging-houses almost exclusively inhabited by Englishmen, it may be said that in this instance, as well as in that of the magnificent roads over the Simplon and Mount Cenis, Napoleon exhausted his best efforts for the convenience of the nation which most he detested. But though he had advanced so far in the improvement of this part of the town, much remained to be done when the reins of power fell from his hands; and it is creditable to your present Government to have completed, in *one* instance at least, what was so well begun by its mighty and hated predecessor—*O! si sic omnia!*

The *Rues de Castiglione* and *Rivoli*, finished since the Restoration, now present two of the most splendid rows of building in this city; while the views enjoyed from the windows of most of the houses, commanding the garden of the Thuilleries, the river Seine and quays, are perhaps unequalled for beauty by those which can be found in any other capital of Europe.

After spending an hour a few mornings since in examining and admiring these newly erected edifices, I was tempted by the fineness of the weather to extend my walk to the *Champs Elisés* and thence to the *Bois de Boulogne*. Soon after I had entered the precincts of the latter, I was overtaken by a party of equestrians, who passed me in full gallop. They

had not advanced fifty yards, when one of them, a youth about fourteen years of age wearing a military uniform, (from the button-hole of which dangled the badge of a chivalrous order,) fell from his horse. I ran to his assistance, but he had already been raised from the ground by his companions. His face was slightly cut, but he seemed more frightened than seriously hurt, and I was much surprised at the importance attached to the accident by his friends, who crowded round him, used the most affectionate terms by way of consolation, and actually kissed his lips. The boy professed his willingness to remount his horse; but he showed no impatience to carry that purpose into execution, but walked slowly forward, leaning on the arms of two of the party. At this moment the Duchess *de Berry* happened to pass in her barouche: observing what had occurred, she humanely stopped and sent her footman to make inquiries. One of the group immediately hurried forward to the carriage door to give the requested information; while the *wounded hero*, electrified by the notice of Royalty, in an instant recovered his strength and spirits, and rapidly followed his companion in order to express his gratitude for the honour conferred on him by the commiserating Duchess. The latter showed much feeling on the occasion, and did not proceed till she had satisfied herself that no

injury had been done.—I mention this little adventure, because I think I perceive in it several traits of national character.

The principal actor in the scene was about the age of an Etonian, or Westminster boy, in the fifth form. Now I could not help reflecting, under similar circumstances how differently one of my young countrymen would have acted: he would have laughed at meeting with such a fall, and, instead of being frightened at the loss of a little blood, would have wiped his face, and, jumping on his horse, galloped away as gaily as if nothing had happened. This pygmy chevalier, on the contrary, though he talked very boldly and swore how he would punish "*ce diable de cheval*," showed every symptom of excessive terror; and the gentlemen who accompanied him, instead of ridiculing his fears, treated the young *militaire* like a girl, and lavished on him the most disgusting caresses. The alacrity, too, with which the boy obeyed the summons of Royalty, and the pleasure which that summons gave him, were circumstances truly indicative of national character.—But perhaps I may be charged with illiberality in using this expression, and I should rather have said that his behaviour proved the bad effects of private education: but national character is so dependent on national education, that it is impossible to separate them; and if you wish to adopt any thing

like a free Constitution in France, you must alter your usual mode of bringing up the children of the higher classes.

I believe it is still the usage here among the rich and noble to employ a domestic tutor (generally an ecclesiastic), to whom a father commits the entire management of his son till he is old enough to go to one of your colleges, whither he is accompanied by the same preceptor, who has too high a respect for the rank of his pupil, either to treat him as an ordinary boy, or to allow him to associate freely with his contemporaries. While therefore the chance of his acquiring any useful knowledge is very doubtful, he soon imbibes such principles as make him for life a bigot in religion and a slave in political opinions.

We order things very differently in England. Our proudest peers condescend to submit the heirs of their family honours at an early age to the undiscriminating discipline of our public schools, where they are infallibly cured of those silly prejudices respecting their own supposed dignity which they may have learnt in the nursery. At such establishments the most perfect equality exists; and so little respect is paid to birth or riches, that a titled boy has often been beaten in my presence by his seniors, by way of giving a lesson of humility to *his lordship*. The benefit of this system is obvious. If the fear of

punishment compel an idle youth to involuntary exertion, the more generous one is urged forward by the natural wish of excelling his companions; while all are taught, by the detestation in which an opposite conduct is viewed by their schoolfellows, to lay aside those selfish propensities which are the cause of half the vices which disgrace our species. Thus respect for public opinion, obedience to law, hatred to oppression, a contempt for meanness, the love of fame and a high sense of honour, are contracted at an age when the mind is most susceptible of impressions, and when in fact the character of the future man is stampt for ever.

A boy so educated, however high his destinies may hereafter lead him, has already acquired in this miniature world a piece of knowledge which is invaluable, namely, that if he wishes to be respected by mankind, he must merit their esteem by the exertion of courage, industry, talent, or virtue.

It may, indeed, be said, that if all classes are treated alike at our public schools, a very opposite system is pursued at those universities where English education is completed; since not only noblemen but even private gentlemen of fortune are distinguished from the poorer students by peculiar dresses indicative of their respective ranks. Perhaps it might be better if no such

badges were retained; but the discipline of our colleges, which of late years has become the same for all, and the effect of the spirit of the age, which shows itself in the indiscriminate manner in which, regardless of different gowns, our young men associate together, render the wearing of this exterior garb but of little importance. Besides, too, at the examinations, to which all candidates for degrees must submit, no favour is shown; and the wealthy and high-born, if they feel the generous desire of gaining distinction, must enter the list with the humblest competitors, and thus learn to depend on their own strength.

Of the happy effect of such a mode of education, the proofs are manifest. You must have remarked, that while the nobles of other countries are rarely much distinguished from their fellow-citizens by literary or scientific acquirements, in England, persons of the largest fortunes and most elevated rank are generally equal, if not superior, in such respects to the ablest members of our learned professions. The reason of this is obvious. The former receive precisely the same education as the latter; while to classical and philosophical information shared by both, they not unfrequently add the knowledge of modern languages and all the advantages of foreign travel.

How happily the custom of bringing up our

children at public institutions is suited to our popular form of government, I need scarcely stop to observe. The mental and bodily contests to which our young men are from infancy habituated, prepare and fortify them for those more serious and important struggles in which they are destined to spend their future lives. The temper is softened by early and constant opposition; and though our two houses of Parliament are not always free from scenes of violence and confusion, the decency and dignity which commonly prevail there could scarcely be preserved among persons who had been differently educated.

I forgot to mention that our school-boys are generally politicians, and that both at Eton and Westminster schools there are debating societies, at which many an embryo statesman and patriot, with the love of fame, first acquires the talent of public elocution.

If you will take the trouble of inquiring into the private history of our most eminent men both living and dead, you will find that the great majority of them were reared at these institutions, while not a few began their career of glory at the same seats of learning.

Not to go further back than the times of those two illustrious individuals whose names so long divided the opinions of Englishmen, Mr. Pitt was

brought up at Cambridge, and Mr. Fox at Eton and Oxford.

Of the persons now most remarkable in public life, numberless are the examples which present themselves in corroboration of my remark.

When, at an annual meeting of the gentlemen who had been his school-fellows, the health was proposed of a gallant Marquis who lost his leg at Waterloo, he assured them that if he had shown any valour in his military capacity, he owed it all to the first *bloody nose* which he got at Westminster; and I have little doubt that his great leader, the Duke of Wellington, would cheerfully pay a like compliment to Eton, where His Grace's boyish days were passed. At that school were educated Lords Sidmouth, Grenville, and Wellesley; and it is somewhat remarkable that on their removal to Oxford, each of these individuals, who became so distinguished afterwards in public life, gained there (and I believe successively) one of the annual prizes. The present Lord Chief Justice (Abbott) and Mr. Canning both obtained similar honours at the same university; and the latter gave such early marks of talent both at school and at college, that long before he took his degree, his name was no less familiar to the ear of the public than it is at this moment.

Westminster lays claim to Lord Lansdown, Eton to Earl Grey, and Cambridge to both.

Southey first wooed the muses at Westminster and Oxford; while Harrow and Cambridge enjoy the distinction of having reared the genius of Lord Byron.—But I must stop. It would be tiresome to continue the enumeration of extraordinary men who in various lines and professions caught the love of fame at one of our great literary institutions; in which number, when we recollect that Sir Walter Scott, Mr. Brougham and Sir James Mackintosh received their education at Edinburgh, and Mr. Plunkett and Thomas Moore at Dublin, the universities of Scotland and Ireland must necessarily be included.

But this letter is already too long. I will therefore bid you somewhat abruptly

Adieu!

C. DARNLEY.

LETTER XXVI.

From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley, Bart.

MY DEAR FRIEND, *London.*

AS I lengthen my residence in this city, I habituate myself more and more to your usages; and many things which at first excited very little interest or curiosity, begin to afford me both amusement and instruction. Among these I should more particularly mention the perusal of newspapers. When, on my arrival in London, I found that not only at hotels and coffee-houses, but also in every private family, they were considered as indispensable accompaniments of the breakfast table; and that when they did not make their appearance at the usual time, they were asked and waited for with the most anxious impatience, I could not conjecture in what that charm consisted which rendered them so attractive. If one of them was placed before me, I used, like the ladies, to throw a glance over the list of deaths and marriages, to see, in the theatrical column, what new play or new opera was announced; and when in the report of foreign transactions the word "*Paris*"

caught my eye, I would extend my lucubrations far enough to ascertain whether the intelligence related to any of my own friends or connexions in that much loved city. Having done this, my curiosity was fully satisfied, and I threw the journal from me, considering that all which it contained beside was a farrago of dull or frivolous matter.

By degrees my studies have been extended, and I am at last so infected with the general mania for reading newspapers, that when business or amusement prevents my running over half a dozen of them, I feel inclined to exclaim, with the Roman Emperor, that "I have lost a day." Indeed, since I have allowed myself time to reflect seriously on the subject, I am convinced that the composition of a newspaper presents one of the most extraordinary examples of the effects of human ingenuity and extended knowledge. Nor can any stronger proof be afforded of the united powers of freedom, industry and civilization, than such a work exhibits. What activity, intelligence, and perseverance, must be put in action to find materials for twenty or thirty of these journals; to arrange, condense, and prepare for the public eye, in language at once correct and elegant, the subjects so discovered; and, in the very limited time allotted for the purpose, to print and disperse numerous copies twice in every day through

the distant quarters of this overgrown metropolis!

Nor am I any longer surprised at the avidity with which newspapers are called for: I have discovered that they are, not only the history of all that is taking place in Great Britain, whether in the Court of the Monarch, the Senate, the Tribunals of Justice, or the more retired circles of private life, but also that, of the world at large. There is a chord which vibrates to the heart of every man, (no matter of what materials his heart be composed,) and I know not the being, who, inattentively perusing the columns of an English newspaper, finds not something to excite his curiosity or to gratify his taste.

The politician, it is needless to say, here enjoys very abundant means of indulging his favourite propensity: the merchant, in the reported price of stocks and other commercial matters, prepares himself for the duties of his professional day: the lawyer reads with delight the lengthened accounts of trials in which his oratory was displayed; and the lover of scandal finds in the same journals those annals of human weakness which are the chosen topics of his conversation: the soldier anxiously examines the list of promoted officers, in the hope of seeing his own name included in the number: the clergyman, with an interest by no means less lively, watches the records of his

deceased and beneficed brethren: the sportsman has his racing calendar; the votary of pleasure his annals of *haut ton*; and the man of letters his auctions of rare books, and the advertisements of published, or expected, works; and the young beauty, her column of balls, plays, and masquerades.

But of all the variegated materials of which one of these papers is composed, nothing appears to me so extraordinary as the manner in which the public is supplied with parliamentary intelligence: that so many long and eloquent speeches made in the two houses of the British senate, all of which were either delivered on the preceding night at a very late hour, or on the morning of the same day in which they are given, should be correctly taken down, printed and distributed by noon at furthest, is a work of such wonderful rapidity, that in other times it certainly would have been attributed to the effects of magic. The inhabitants of London are so accustomed to this daily luxury, that they enjoy it (precisely as rich persons do the various articles which load their tables), without remarking the vast exertions which must have been made to procure them such a gratification. I do not share that indifference; and since I have become a constant reader of your parliamentary debates, I am every day more and more surprised at the ability and address with which they are collected and laid before the public.

But while I do ample justice to the talents and ingenuity of the gentlemen concerned in the various duties connected with these papers, I cannot help expressing my regret that the editors of them (I speak of those under the influence of both parties) often *abuse* that liberty of the press which is your proudest characteristic and most valuable privilege. It is the habit of all of these to indulge in a current of satire against the most exalted characters; the violence of which is neither checked by a respect for rank, sex, nor decency. The personages which your laws more particularly hold out for reverence (including the reigning Sovereign himself) are daily made the objects of the most wanton calumnies—and though in this country you boast of the retired habits of your ladies, and of the strict principles in which they are educated, I find the conduct of females, whom no tribunal has yet condemned, scrutinized with the most unmerciful severity; while the circles of confidential intimacy are daily thrown open to the gaze of a curious and not very indulgent public—and trials are reported and scenes related which the eye of modesty cannot read without a blush.—All this seems to me very objectionable. But I consider it as a greater stigma to these papers that the editors, forgetting what they owe to the admirable system of government under which they live, and by which they are enabled to ex-

press themselves with unbridled freedom, represent the British Constitution (that Constitution which is the envy of all the world besides) as an edifice falling to decay, and which can no longer stand under the protection of its ancient walls. With a parricidal hand the venerable pile is attacked on every side. One set of politicians would convert it into a military fortress, and another would pull it down, and substitute for its long tried excellence a light and airy edifice of fancied perfection.

Thus I see the writers under the banners both of Ministers, and Opposition, trying to undermine the code of laws under which they exclusively, among the journalists of Europe, enjoy the glorious privilege of being able to address their fellow subjects by an organ liable to no previous censure or examination.

I shall shock your patriotic spirit in making the remark; but when I see it thus abused, I am sometimes led to doubt the advantages of an unrestricted press.—But I have not made up my mind on the subject, and am anxious to hear what you, who, I know, have considered it more maturely, can say in favour of a popular right, which is so often used to mislead and inflame the public, for whose benefit it was originally granted.

In England, indeed, you have been so long accustomed to the daily exchange of violent abuse

against every thing which is great or venerable, that it may be allowed to continue without any serious danger; but do you not think that if in France the press were equally unfettered, we should have our passions so strongly excited on both sides, that either a civil war or a new revolution would be unavoidable?

I feel so interested in the examination of this question, and rely so much on the strength of your opinion, that I must beg you to make it the subject of your next letter, which I shall be impatient to receive.

Accept the assurance of my sincere attachment.

LE MARQUIS DE VERMONT.

LETTER XXVII.

From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.

MY DEAR MARQUIS, *Paris.*

I HAVE received your last letter, and am happy to find that you begin to derive amusement from the perusal of our English newspapers; for the newspapers form no trifling ingredient in the happiness of a London day. I join with you in admiring the talent and activity displayed in the composition of such journals, and in lamenting those abuses of the press of which they are sometimes guilty.——But while I regret the latter, I must be allowed to observe, in the forcible language of a distinguished female writer, whom I am proud to call my friend, "that as every blessing may be perverted to a bad purpose, if we are to deprive ourselves of the liberty of the press, because it may occasionally be made the instrument of mischief, we ought by parity of reasoning to dispense with fire, lest by accident or carelessness it should become the means of our destruction." This single sentence conveys so complete a refutation of all the arguments which can be adduced on the other side, that in quoting

it, I have, perhaps, made the best answer to that part of your letter. But as you require my opinion, and as it is now too much the fashion to talk of the danger of an unrestricted right of printing, I shall examine the question more at large. If no other defence could be offered for this system than the example of the only country in Europe which has fairly tried it, and which country is universally allowed to have attained the highest degree possible of political happiness, I should think enough had already been said to prove its advantages, particularly with those *practical* men, who are so fond, on all occasions, of appealing to the experience of history: and the more so as America, as far as her limited annals go, presents another instance of its beneficial effects.

Whoever visits Great Britain, and attentively examines its institutions, cannot fail to remark that the *influence* of *public opinion* constitutes one of the happiest consequences and firmest supports of our excellent and much envied Constitution. Now how could that opinion be formed, cherished, or communicated, if the organ were silenced by which information is now spread with such vast rapidity from one end of the empire to the other?

In absolute monarchies, the sovereign whose intentions are good deprives himself of a great advantage in laying the press under restrictions;

since his motives, which are always suspected, can never be explained or understood; for who will listen to a voice which no one is allowed to answer? With us, on the contrary, the writers on the side of Government are read with no less attention than those in favour of Opposition, because both enjoy an equal right and power of communicating freely their respective opinions.—Hence, according to a vulgar but expressive phrase, "though John Bull is often wrong at first, he generally gets right at last." In other words, the unrestricted dissemination of knowledge and good sense produces in the end its proper effect; for truth, when left to pursue its natural course, finds, like water, its own level.

Let it be remembered also, that as assassination is the tremendous means by which anger vents its fury in countries where the lower ranks are not allowed to end their personal disputes with the fist, so where no one can state his real or supposed grievances, conspiracies and insurrections are frequent, and these commonly end in open rebellion. In England, many an enraged patriot, the violence of whose passions would have led him, under other circumstances, to violate his allegiance, exhausts his anger in a pamphlet, or newspaper philippic, and remains a peaceable and useful member of the community.—Nor, perhaps, are even the abuses of the press (which

however I pretend not to justify) unattended by some beneficial consequences. The most inexcusable are those on private character, which are often the cause of great individual misery; yet I have little doubt, that though made with the most mischievous intentions, and therefore not to be justified, the general effect of them is useful to the public. The apprehension of being so attacked, and dragged before the eyes of an unmerciful world, produces in every class and order of Englishmen an attention to decency and decorum such as is rarely met with in other countries; and I have no hesitation in saying, that if, in spite of increased wealth and increased luxury, Great Britain exhibits an extraordinary instance of morals comparatively pure, we owe this advantage to the general dread of being exposed, by an opposite conduct, to the animadversions of a free and scrutinizing press. In respect to our public men, the advantage of having them constantly held up to popular observation, is too obvious to require any elucidation; and if it be allowed that in the report of certain trials, which the editors of our newspapers are too fond of relating in detail, the eye of modesty may sometimes be shocked, we should remember that almost every good in this life has its accompanying evil; and it may be asked, whether we are not indemnified for the partial mischief just stated, by the great benefit

enjoyed by the nation at large in the publicity of such proceedings? Our advocates, our judges, our juries, and our witnesses, know that their words and actions will be communicated through the newspapers to the most distant corners of the earth; and our tribunals themselves are thus made amenable to a still higher and mightier authority. Who can doubt that such a consideration must operate very forcibly in rendering our courts of law, in the strictest sense of the word, courts of impartial justice?

I agree with you that in two cases, which you have properly put together, because they are both cases in which the individuals abused cannot defend themselves, I mean those of the Sovereign and of female character, great indecency and great injustice may be traced in our diurnal prints; —but even in these instances, though individuals suffer, the public is the gainer. The King of Great Britain is in his *political* capacity *legibus solutus;* and if as a *private* man he were equally invulnerable by the pen of the satirist, could it be expected that in future ages the throne of England would remain exempt from those scenes of vice and immorality which, in other countries, have been so injurious to the cause of royalty, as well as to that, of virtue and religion? —With respect to our ladies, it is certainly painful to see them exposed to scurrility; yet if we

scrupulously examine the lives of those who are made the subject of newspaper lampoons, we shall find that, however innocent they may be of the *particular* charge adduced against them, few, if any, are entirely faultless. The virtues of women are best seen in the interior of their own family; and she who has put herself sufficiently forward to become the subject of libellous attack, has already thrown aside that shield of modesty and reserve which is the brightest ornament, as well as best protection, of female character.

The space allotted to a letter is too short to permit me to carry the argument any further. Long experience has shown, that, in England at least, a free press is attended with the happiest consequences.—Whether it would suit the volatile nature of your people, it is not for me to determine; but if it be true that a considerable majority of the nation condemned the system of tyranny, anarchy and bloodshed, which during the various scenes of your late revolution was pursued by the different dictators who in turn seized the helm of power, such a submission of the greater number to the few, and of the good to the bad, can only have occurred in a country where no channel of communication, like that of a free press, afforded the means of resistance.—Besides, too, if France, so renowned for arts, arms, science and literature, is yet unfit to enjoy the blessings of

civil liberty, how is this unfinished yet essential part of her political education to be acquired, except by allowing truth, reason and knowledge to circulate with unrestricted freedom?

Adieu! Ever yours,

C. DARNLEY.

LETTER XXVIII.

From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley, Bart.

MY DEAR DARNLEY, *London.*

I HAVE now spent six months in England, and during that time have mixed in the gayest circles of this luxurious capital.—I should be ungrateful not to add, that I have universally been received with splendid hospitality. Yet, with the single exception of the family of Mr. Gourville (to whose acquaintance I introduced you in a former letter), I know not the house in London where strangers are permitted to enjoy that free, easy, and familiar access, which, from early habit, is essential to the happiness of a Frenchman.

Of assemblies, concerts, quadrille parties, masquerades, and grand dinners, I have partaken almost to satiety. My eye is tired of the blaze of crowded ball-rooms, my ear of the sound of music, and my stomach of eating turbot, and drinking Champagne. In short, I am sick of living in public, and sigh for the pleasures of that intimate and unceremonious communication which constitutes the charm of real society.

It is indeed a most extraordinary circumstance, that, of all the nations in Europe, the English, though the most esteemed for their simplicity and domestic virtues, are the least easily known, because seldom seen in their natural character. In other countries the haughtiest noble allows not only his friends, but even his commonest acquaintance, to view him in his hours of retirement. If discovered at his toilet, he is not distressed at being gazed at in his bed-gown; and if found at table with his wife and children, he blushes not at the modesty of his ordinary meal—a meal of which, without ceremony or restraint, he asks the accidental visiter to partake. All this is reversed in England. If, in spite of contrary orders, and strict prohibitions, an aukward servant allows an unexpected guest to find his way beyond the threshold of the door, the utmost confusion is sure to ensue. He is either met by a better disciplined servant, who, with a thousand bows and apologies for the mistake which has been made, assures him that his master is not at home; or, conducted into an empty room, and left there for half an hour, while he hears bells ringing and people running about, he is at last waited on by the gentleman of the house, whose assumed politeness and repeated excuses but ill accord with the embarrassment which is legible in his countenance.—But when, without such interruption, the

intruder is led at once into the presence of the persons whom he comes to visit, a side frown given to the stupid attendant by whose error he has gained admittance, a similar look exchanged between the husband and the wife, the dismissal of the children, or the sudden disappearance of the lady, too plainly discovers how little he is welcome.

If the stranger, unacquainted with the manners of London, happens to knock at the door near the time of dinner, and is by some unlucky mismanagement permitted to pass the porter's lodge, the mischief is still greater, and every possible manœuvre is practised to get him out of the house with the utmost expedition. Foreigners are astonished at finding that he who receives them on one day with the most lavish profusion, will on the next carefully abstain from exercising the lowest act of ordinary hospitality. I have indeed been often asked to *family dinners;* but these family dinners (true symbols of proud humility) have always proved no less luxurious than the professed banquets which your daily newspapers are so fond of describing for the amusement and edification of the world at large.

"We order these things better in France." Though it is only the very rich who give *des diners parés*, there is scarcely an individual at Paris, inhabiting a third or fourth floor in one of

our hotels, who is not happy to welcome to his soup and *bouilli* the friend who may happen to call when he is taking that meal. In this manner, with fortunes generally very inferior to yours, we enjoy one of the greatest pleasures of civilized life,—that of frequently receiving at our tables those whom we love and esteem, and passing almost daily in their company several hours of unrestrained and confidential intimacy. And we do this without any additional trouble to ourselves or our servants, and without incurring expenses little suited to the mediocrity of our pecuniary resources.

Unless I am much mistaken, the different modes of estimating rank in the two countries occasion this difference in our manners. Entertaining fewer prejudices than ourselves on the subject of birth, and the aristocracy of rank being infinitely more limited here than in France, you pay a respect to wealth which is unknown to us; and, in order to assume the appearance of possessing that grand criterion of merit, you wear a perpetual mask; while, in your attempts to keep up the appearance of rich men, you often reduce yourselves to positive want. Resting our claims to distinction in society either on personal worth or on hereditary pretensions, we, on the contrary, disdain the honours offered to the mere favourites of fortune, and care not how generally it may be

known that our tables are not loaded with all the luxuries of the East.

What renders the system of giving ruinous entertainments particularly ridiculous is, that no one is deceived by it. Who imagines that the donor of a gala lives with equal magnificence on ordinary occasions; and who doubts that it is an effort of vanity, which can be but seldom repeated? The fashion therefore in London of exchanging great dinners, is little more than a general agreement to visit each other in assumed characters, and to play a game of *humbug* which imposes on none but the weakest and least experienced of mankind.

Perhaps, indeed, the perpetual feasting of the appetite, unaccompanied by any endeavour to gratify the mind or heart, may be the cause of that apathy and *ennui* which form the two prevailing maladies of your richer countrymen. In hopes to get rid of those evils, they are for ever in motion; and, not content with going from their country houses to London, and from London to Bath and Cheltenham, they migrate in flocks to the most distant corners of the earth. Abroad, they live exclusively together, and follow the same habits to which they owed their misery at home. Change of place, therefore, produces no change of feeling, and they continue to wander about, laughed at by those who thrive by their extravagance, and the living pictures of woe; while envied and hated by the rest of the world, for the

possession of that wealth which affords *them* so little gratification.

Society is the first blessing of civilized man; and as no nation enjoys this less than you or more than we, I am inclined to think that during our late political misfortunes, when so many of our first families, after losing every thing but their honour, found a generous asylum in England, it often happened that a little *coterie* of French emigrants, partaking of an *omelette* or a sallad in a garret of Mary-le-bone, were infinitely gayer, and, in spite of all their calamities, infinitely happier, than your British nobles in their more brilliant circles of Portman, or Grosvenor, Square.

Let me conclude this letter by expressing an anxious hope, that peace may long continue between our respective countries; and that, among innumerable other advantages which we shall both derive from it, we may gradually correct each other's faults by mutual examination. On the subjects of political economy and legislation, perhaps we have still much to learn from you, and in return do you condescend to be taught by us how social life may be best enjoyed; for ostentation forms no necessary part of real hospitality, and virtue and friendship can make us happy, even in spite of the frowns of fortune.

Adieu!

DE VERMONT.

LETTER XXIX.

From Sir Charles Darnley to the Marquis de Vermont.

MY DEAR MARQUIS, *Paris.*

THE fault in our national character which forms the subject of your last letter, is one which I shall not attempt to deny or even to palliate. It is but too true that the object aimed at, in nine out of ten entertainments given in London, is to gratify the vanity of the donors, and that what they call society is little more than a race of ambition. But while I confess that to assume or to keep up an appearance of abundant wealth, is the cause of that general extravagance which you have remarked at the houses of all classes, I cannot as readily admit that to a similar motive should be attributed the habit, very common among us, of refusing at particular times to receive accidental visitors. Many silly persons would indeed blush to have it known how ill their ordinary fare accorded with the magnificence of those banquets or galas with which they occasionally astonish the votaries of fashion; but the generality of our countrymen are swayed by no such petty consi-

derations, and, in confining themselves for several hours every day to the circle of their respective families, simply follow the dictates of taste and inclination.

It is one of our noblest characteristics to feel the charms of home, and in this word is included every blessing of domestic life. Much as an Englishman values his political rights, he holds still dearer his personal freedom, and to be disturbed in his hours of privacy is with him to lose the latter. Though, at times, delighted to see seated at his board those whose virtues he esteems or whose society he values, at other periods he likes to devote himself exclusively to study, to contemplation, or the conversation of his wife and children. When engaged in any of his favourite pursuits, in professional avocations, in reading a new book, pamphlet or favourite newspaper, in settling his accounts, or in passing an hour of unceremonious happiness with his dearest kindred, the arrival of an unexpected stranger disturbs his quiet, deranges his plans, and, robbing him of his much loved independence, puts him out of humour.

Such are the feelings which probably occasioned that appearance of embarrassment which you have remarked on similar occasions. You were right in conjecturing that the unbidden guest was at such times unwelcome; but he was unwelcome

for the reason which I have just assigned, and not because the person on whom he intruded was found undressed, or partaking of a comparatively humble meal.

Permit me also to remark that, without being influenced by vanity, or the desire of making a display, there are few persons who do not feel disposed to prepare for an honoured visitor something better than the ordinary fare. So natural is this feeling, that one of our poets well acquainted with the human heart (Hammond) describes an attached female demonstrating her gratitude to him by whom her lover was protected, by selecting for his use the choicest productions of her garden, or, as he expresses it,

"And for her husband's patron cull the best."

Nor has our immortal Milton himself disdained to draw a similar picture; for in a very beautiful passage of Paradise Lost, our first parent Eve is represented plucking the finest fruits of Paradise, and setting them before the messenger of Heaven.

Englishmen may then be pardoned, if, carrying a virtue to excess, they sometimes, while exercising hospitality, exceed the bounds of prudence. Your manners differ so widely from ours in all these particulars, that I am neither surprised nor offended by your remarks; but while I allow that you enjoy *society* more than we do, I must con-

tend that to you the comforts of *home* are less familiar. On a fare estimate therefore of our respective advantages, an equal share of happiness seems allotted to each.

Nor am I quite certain whether the formality of a written invitation, which generally precedes an English dinner, may not contribute to produce that urbanity and politeness which are generally prevalent on these occasions. In putting on our evening *costume*, we are reminded of the necessity of assuming such manners, and engaging in such conversation only, as shall not prove offensive to the different persons whom we may meet at the tables of our friends. The disappointed man suspends his habitual complaints, the invalid ceases to talk of his sufferings, the patriot lays aside his rancour against the man in power, and the man in power abstains from casting reflections on the motives of his opponents. In short, every body goes to one of these parties with a full determination to avoid doing any thing which may interrupt the general harmony. You have now been long enough in England to know that I am justified in what I assert; and if you have not always been amused at one of these meetings, I am convinced you will say that you never remarked the least violation of propriety or good manners. Now I cannot make precisely the same assertion respecting those *impromptu* dinners, which are so

frequently given at Paris; for *impromptu* dinners, like *impromptu* speeches, if sometimes delightful, must occasionally prove quite the reverse.

It has been my good fortune to be frequently admitted in the intimate manner you describe, at the tables of those to whom you had the kindness to recommend me; and on one of these occasions I lately witnessed the very unpleasant scene which I am about to relate. The master of the house and all his guests being of the Ultra-Royalist faction, an old gentleman who was present, forgetting that several returned emigrants had lately been restored to their military rank in the French service, cast some reflections on the officers of the army in general, which another of the party, animated *par l'esprit du corps*, thought it his duty as warmly to combat. A most painful altercation ensued; language scarcely less violent than such as once disgraced your national assembly, was exchanged at a private board between these *preux chevaliers*; and the lady of the house did not succeed in pacifying them till she had almost exhausted the magical powers of female influence, united to all the charms of "*la grace française.*" Now such an occurrence as this I think I might venture to say would never occur among persons of similar rank in England; and though I agree with you, that true hospitality consists in welcoming one's friends without form or ostentation,

yet so difficult is it to enjoy any pleasure without alloy, that we seldom exchange ceremony for familiarity without subjecting our feelings to the possibility of receiving offence.

Allow me also to observe, that if the time which we still devote to dinner be too long, that which you dedicate to the same purpose is too short. To sit half, and sometimes all, the night, as our ancestors used to do, quaffing port wine, punch and tobacco, is certainly a barbarous usage; but the opposite extreme seems also objectionable. The single hour to which a Parisian dinner is limited, is merely sufficient for the gratification of the appetite, and excludes all the charms of convivial intercourse. With us, as these things are now regulated, the pleasure of eating and drinking forms but a small portion of the expected entertainment, and the meal to which a selection of agreeable persons is invited, is considered only as an apology for bringing them together. Nor do I think it possible to enjoy a greater intellectual treat, than that which is found in a well-chosen circle assembled by a person of taste in this metropolis.

Balls, assemblies, and masquerades, may be gratifying to the young, the giddy, and the vain; but it is at our dinner parties that the learned and well-informed come in contact with each other, and, in the interchange of manly thought and li-

beral opinions, feel the highest distinction of civilized men.

Nor will I plead guilty to the charge of want of gallantry, brought so often against us by your countrymen, for *dismissing* (as they are pleased to call it) the ladies at an early hour from our tables. It should be recollected, that that separation does not take place till a much longer time has elapsed than both sexes usually spend together at similar parties at Paris; and though it is true that we do deprive ourselves of the company of our wives and daughters when the bottle begins to circulate more freely, we do so but for a limited period, and, returning to them at the tea-table, spend the rest of the evening in their society.

But the great advantage of this arrangement is, that the delicacy of the female ear is thereby freed from the risk of being exposed to coarse jokes, or to the violence of political discussion.

Now, in spite of your boasted politeness and boasted deference to the fair, I have heard party questions at Paris discussed with the utmost acrimony, not only in the presence of the ladies, but also between them and male disputants, while the latter seemed to think themselves excused for laying aside that courtesy with which on other occasions it is usual in France to treat "*le beau sexe.*"

I have put these observations together, as I have done those contained in my former letters, with no desire to conceal or to apologize for the faults of English manners, but in order to prove how deeply the stranger should reflect before he presumes to condemn the usages of other countries. If this be true as a general remark, it is doubly so respecting England, which has justly been called a little world in itself, differing from all the rest of Europe in laws, government, habits, and manner of living. Indeed I believe the favourable or unfavourable opinion of foreigners respecting Great Britain, may generally be traced to the more or less time which they have spent on our shores. Such as only stay long enough to take a transient view, are sure to condemn, because, finding every thing different from that to which they have been accustomed at home, they conclude, with the rapidity of prejudice and ignorance, that every thing is bad; while they who are more patient, and extend their visit, never fail to become the warmest admirers of those institutions, manners, and customs, to which they at first applied the epithet of "barbarous."

I am delighted, my dear Vermont, to see how carefully you examine the objects which present themselves to your observation. Though I cannot boast of equalling you in judgement, I endeavour to imitate you in patience; and whenever

I feel inclined to pass a censure on what I see in France, though I venture candidly to hint my opinion, I do not consider myself justified in entertaining it till it receives your sanction.

Now, though certainly I have been the principal gainer in our correspondence, I flatter myself that you, too, may have derived some benefit from the communications which we have exchanged.

As one of the strongest arguments in favour of a mixed form of government is, that no law can be passed till it is again and again discussed,—so the habit of submitting an individual's sentiments to the examination of a friend (however inferior that friend may be) is attended with this good consequence,—that questions are not prematurely determined, and prejudice has time to yield to the voice of reason and experience.

Thus, my dear friend, both you and I shall by degrees learn to see our respective countries free from those false impressions which a mistaken partiality or antipathy may have at first led us to entertain. I would to God that it were possible to find the means of making our fellow-subjects on both sides of the water view each other in as true a light.—"We are," as I think I recollect having read that Buonaparte, at one of his levees during the consular government, observed to a party of Englishmen who then were presented to him, "the two most powerful and most civilized

nations of the earth; we mutually deserve each other's esteem; and we ought to unite in cultivating peace, literature, and the fine arts, and by so doing to form the happiness of mankind."

In making use of the words of that celebrated man, I by no means pledge myself for the sincerity of the wish which he seemed to express; but I am sure it is one in which you and I shall unite. And I am equally persuaded that you will also agree with me in thinking, that every event which is calculated to extend the rational freedom of other nations is interesting to France and England, and that to promote the welfare of the one, is really to serve the other.

I remain ever yours,

C. DARNLEY.

LETTER XXX.

From the Marquis de Vermont to Sir Charles Darnley, Bart.

MY DEAR DARNLEY, *London.*

EVERY day convinces me more and more of the truth of an observation made in your last letter —"That the favourable or unfavourable report of a foreigner respecting the English capital, will depend on the time which he allots to the examination of its customs and manners; for they differ so entirely from those of the rest of Europe, that at first they have no chance of pleasing."

If at the expiration of a month I had taken my departure from London, I am conscious that I should have been guilty of great injustice; since undoubtedly I should have censured many things, of the excellence of which the experience of a whole winter spent in this town has convinced me. I fear my judgements may yet appear precipitate; but as circumstances have occurred which render it improbable that I shall be able much longer to extend my visit, I sit down to give you

the result of my observations. As the purpose of this letter is to lay before you those scattered thoughts to which innumerable objects have given rise, I shall make no apology for sending you an unconnected miscellany.

It happened to me, a few days since, to accompany a celebrated artist in a country excursion: and when, on beholding a fine but extensive prospect, using a common if not very correct phrase, I exclaimed "*How picturesque!*" "By no means," replied my professional friend; "say grand, beautiful, majestic,—any thing but *picturesque;* for I would defy even the genius of *Salvator Rosa* to make a good picture of the landscape before us; the objects which it presents are too numerous—the powers of art are limited—nature only can crowd her charms and still be lovely."

When I look back on all that memory places before my "mind's eye" in my visit to this interesting city, I experience a similar feeling, and despair of being able to sketch, however imperfectly, the variegated scene.

Finding it impossible to take a general view, I shall principally confine myself in this letter to "London considered as a place of residence," and shall examine whether, amidst all its magnificence and multiplied advantages, it affords generally to strangers those amusements for which great towns are visited.

I am ready to allow that to such as possess robust health, large fortunes, high rank, strong recommendations, or unblushing forwardness, it offers every species of diversified enjoyment. But without some or all of these qualifications, I suspect that, of the many who come hither buoyed up with high hopes of expected pleasure, few will go away fully satisfied. The hours are so late, the season so short, and the ordinary expenses so heavy, that none but the young and rich seem fit candidates for the festivities of the British metropolis; while the *certain set*, which I have endeavoured to describe in some of my former letters, is so omnipotent in all the arrangements of social life, that their favour seems likewise an indispensable requisite. The members of that favoured community carry about with them (like the landlords of our Parisian *hotels garnis*) a *passe-par-tout* or master-key, which opens every door, and for *them* and *their satellites* there is no end of varied amusement.

Very different is the lot of an individual not so introduced; and it is singular enough that the capital of the freest country in Europe is precisely the one where the high-born and affluent enjoy a monopoly of gratification.

Two-thirds of the entertainments of this town are *private* (if that epithet can be strictly applied to assemblies consisting of four or five hundred persons); and to these only the *protégés* of a

leading dame of quality can hope to be invited, unless indeed the stranger be recommended by the attractive charms of notoriety, or by the possession of some convivial talent, the exhibition of which he is willing to display *ad libitum* in exchange for the civilities he may receive.

Places of public diversion, such as in other great cities are open to every one who can pay the stipulated price of admission, are here not accessible to all. When subscription balls, concerts, and even galas in honour of national festivals, are advertised in your newspapers, a catalogue of high-titled patronesses is always added, without whose special permission no one is permitted to purchase tickets. Now, as these Right Honourable ladies are known to be very capricious in the manner in which they exercise the dictatorship so intrusted to them, the wives and daughters of eminent professional men and private gentlemen must on those occasions either forgo their chance of enjoying the promised spectacle, or, in submitting to solicit favours from persons whom they neither know nor esteem, do what is most repugnant to generous minds.

A propos: I am told that your proudest peeresses condescend to lend their town mansions for the performance of public concerts, the whole expense of which is paid by the person for whose benefit they are given, while the noble owners are

remunerated for the use of their rooms by being permitted to introduce *gratis* a certain number of their own acquaintance. I hear too (such is the power of vanity) that crowds anxiously solicit the honour of being allowed to subscribe to these concerts, not actuated by a love of music, but by the desire of being thus enabled to boast in their own little circles that they are going to the Duchess of Dashall's in Piccadilly, to Lady Rattleton's in Pall Mall, or the Marchioness of Chalkstone's in Grosvenor Square. But while vaunting of such their engagements, they carefully conceal the accompanying fact, that they owe to their *gold* an admittance into houses, where on other occasions they would never be suffered to appear.

The opera-house, though the grand resort of the fashionable world, is not yet subjected to the empire of patronage; but still its amusements (at least for females) are, for the reasons assigned in a former letter, only within the reach of a very limited number. Nor is it easy without interest to obtain places at your national theatres, when either the promised performance of a new play or that of a favourite actor excites the curiosity of the public.

In short, so few are the diversions which strangers can command in London, that I am inclined to think the family of a respectable foreigner, or even English country-gentleman, without con-

nexions in the metropolis, might spend six months here without participating in any of the most attractive pleasures of the place. Persons so circumstanced may indeed frequent Bond-street, the Parks, Kensington Gardens, the Panoramas, Exhibitions, Picture-galleries, and Bazaars, in the morning,—may be occasionally invited to a *second-hand* dinner at the table of some distinguished person to whom they have brought a letter of recommendation,—and end their evenings at Vauxhall, Sadler's Wells, Astley's or the Cobourg Theatre. But while their night's rest is constantly disturbed by the noise of carriages rolling along in all directions to the numberless galas, (which at the short period of the year allotted to gaiety seem incessant,) they must content themselves with reading in the newspapers of the following day, an exaggerated account of those entertainments, from which they are as completely excluded as if they had committed the most disgraceful crimes.

Though, in consequence of your partial recommendations, I have learnt by experience how happily a person may live in this town, while enjoying the protecting smiles of a few great personages, I believe, as far as I can judge from observation and report, that many a stranger finds himself here in the worst of all solitudes, surrounded by festive scenes of which he is not allowed to partake.

In this respect London loses much when compared with Paris. In the latter of those cities, so variegated are the amusements, and so adapted are they to different tastes, ages, and stations, that while the rich riot in enjoyment, even the poorest are not entirely without diversion.

I have before stated my surprise at the homage paid to rank in this land of freedom; and the longer I stay here, the more convinced I am that you are the most *aristocratic* nation under the sun.

Nothing is to be done in this town without *great names*, and with them nothing is impossible. If an assemblage of persons is to be brought together, no matter for what purpose, whether political, literary, scientific, charitable or religious, the first thing necessary is to secure, if possible, a Royal chairman, and a long catalogue of distinguished stewards, commencing with Dukes and Marquises, and descending in graceful gradations to Baronets, Knights, and M.P.s.—Nay, even when a popular meeting is called to consider of a petition for the redress of some real or supposed grievance, a noble Lord must preside, and the only orators who are listened to with attention are those whose reputation has been previously established in one of your houses of parliament.

Indeed so magical is the effect produced by the example of illustrious patrons, that I am told the

managers of public institutions supported by voluntary contributions, are quite satisfied with obtaining the *nominal* support of such Right Honourable personages, and never expect to receive the subscriptions of the latter, which in fact are but rarely paid. And I have heard (though I am unwilling to believe the report) that a noble Peer, since I believe deceased, acted for many years as president at the anniversary of a public institution in this town, and during the whole of that time always *forgot* to pay for his dinner, the price of which, together with that of the professional singers hired on the occasion for the amusement of the company, was defrayed out of the funds of the Society.

No man of observation can pass a day in this town without remarking the importance attached by all classes to the favour of the great. In every street, the display of a blazoned coat of arms draws one's attention to some shop, the keeper of which seems to recommend his merchandize, not by the excellence of the things in which he deals, but because the vender is, or pretends to be, protected by the English prince or foreign potentate whose heraldic ensigns he has thought fit to exhibit. The milliners, tailors, jewellers, coach-makers, watch-makers, and even wig-makers, endeavour to catch customers by protesting to those who come into their respective

shops, that whatever they happen to admire is precisely the counterpart of an article just ordered by the Earl of —— or the Duchess of ——; nay, I am assured that even physicians find no method so sure of obtaining patients, as that of being often seen knocking at the door of some well-known lord. The legal privileges of the Peerage in this country are, I believe, confined to the person who holds the title: but its *reflected* dignity extends very far, and I have frequently been present when one individual has been recommended to the acquaintance of another, not on account of his moral qualities or talents, but because he was the son, brother, nephew, uncle, or cousin (though in the tenth degree), of a member of your upper house of parliament. Even the aristocracy of talent here bows to the aristocracy of birth and riches; and at those *blue-stocking* or *soi-disant* literary parties, which, in order to attract company by the charms of novelty, are sometimes given by ladies no longer in their prime, persons of the most distinguished genius and most profound learning condescend to appear, though it is impossible that they should not discover, that, like the pine-apples and champaigne punch, they are brought thither merely to give *éclat* to the *fête* and importance to its donor.

Next to the recommendation of *great names*,

the difficulty with which any thing is procured here, seems precisely that which gives it the greatest value; and if foreigners agreed in taste with Englishmen on this head, London would indeed be the most delightful of all places, for at every step some obstacle presents itself.

While similar sights are all viewed *gratis* on the continent, neither the Tower, St. Paul's Cathedral, nor Westminster Abbey, can be visited without the payment of several fees; and when the stranger expresses a wish of seeing the West Indian or London docks, the Breweries, Distilleries, and other such numberless interesting objects as abound in this metropolis, he finds he cannot gratify his curiosity, till he has obtained a written permission from the directors or proprietors of each of these institutions; and though the British Museum is indeed open to every one, the building which contains it stands in so inconvenient a part of the town, that the treasures which are there accumulated can be but rarely contemplated.

If a foreigner feel a desire to witness your parliamentary debates, a member's order must be procured, and some labour and no little patience be submitted to, while sitting several hours in a crowded gallery, before the business commences.

If again he is anxious to study the English character at those clubs where your countrymen

spend so large a portion of their time, though many of them have with liberal hospitality lately opened their doors to Continental visiters, this privilege can only be claimed by such as are fortunate enough to obtain the recommendation of some distinguished member.

The rich and noble proprietors of those picture galleries, which no person would willingly leave London without seeing, have kindly permitted them to be exhibited: but admittance cannot be gained without tickets; and though no great interest be necessary to procure them, it is often more than the unprotected stranger can command. At the British Institution, he may see for his money in the morning the *chefs-d'œuvres* which are there collected; but unless favoured by the special order of a manager, he must despair of sharing one of the most elegant amusements of the English capital,—I mean, when the rooms containing these works are lighted up in an evening at the expense of its liberal patrons.

In short, while I confess that the opulence of London is unbounded; that it contains within its walls every thing which the scholar, the statesman or the philosopher can wish to contemplate; that it is the seat of freedom, knowledge, industry and philanthropy;—still you must pardon me for adding that, of all the capitals in Europe, it is that in which the native of another country

has the least chance of passing his time agreeably, unless on his arrival he is placed under the immediate protection of some distinguished personage. If, indeed, the motive of his journey be not present gratification—if he come hither to lay up a store of political, commercial, or professional information, which may hereafter benefit himself and the nation from whose precincts he has wandered—to such a man I would say "*Quod petis hic est;*" and I am persuaded that, in going away, he would allow, as I do, that no where could six months be more profitably spent.

With regard to myself, when I reflect on the difficulties which other foreigners have to surmount, and on the facility with which from the first I found my way into the most enviable circles of this interesting capital, the more grateful I feel for those advantages which I so unworthily have enjoyed—advantages which I owed entirely to you, and for which, as it is impossible that I should adequately express my acknowledgements, I shall simply say "I thank you."

Adieu, my dear Darnley.

De Vermont.

LETTER XXXI.

From Sir Charles Darnley, Bart., to the Marquis de Vermont.

MY DEAR VERMONT, *Paris.*

I GRIEVE to learn by your last letter that your visit to London is drawing to a close: first, because I am unwilling to lose a continuation of your remarks on the manners of my native city; and secondly, because, as many of the prejudices with which you arrived in England have already yielded to the dictates of sound sense and candid examination, I have no doubt that a little longer experience would have removed such unfavourable impressions as your mind may yet retain.

In your observations on the power of *great names*, and fashionable influence, I am afraid you are too accurate; but though many similar weaknesses and absurdities may be traced through all classes of the inhabitants of the British metropolis, I flatter myself that there is not one in which faults and foibles are not counterbalanced by higher and better qualities. With regard to our nobility, their number is so small, that they

may be said to stand on a pinnacle, where all their actions are exhibited to public view; and, as the world is fonder of giving censure than praise, their imperfections are sure to receive the lash of satire, while many a virtue receives not its merited commendation. From an intimate acquaintance with the characters of many of them, I will venture to assert, that if some of our Peers and Peeresses have made themselves notorious by their follies or their vices, in the remainder (consisting of much the larger number) will be found many splendid examples of moral worth, generous feeling, and intellectual excellence.

But though such I believe to be the picture, and by no means a flattered one, of those who occupy the highest ranks among us, it is not to them, but to an order of persons one step lower, that I would wish to direct your attention, as presenting the best specimen of the English character. And I am persuaded that no preceding age or country ever boasted of a more numerous body of well informed, liberal and spirited men than that which the gentry of Great Britain now displays. Your friend Mr. Gourville seems by your account to possess in an eminent degree the good qualities of this class; but he is by no means a singular instance, and thousands may be discovered, who though not as rich, or so highly gifted as to talent, are yet equally independent, equally

incapable of meditating a base action, or of bending the knee to power or grandeur.

Having thus in few words endeavoured to do justice to a class of my countrymen which deserves your particular observation, because in France you have no order exactly corresponding, I cannot help remarking, that the more we investigate what are called national characteristics, the more we find that they are in fact only exterior garbs, varying in appearance, but covering similar feelings, foibles, and weaknesses.

I had just read your last letter, when, in paying one of those daily visits to which, in compliance with your habits, I have accustomed myself, I found a gentleman engaged in conversation with the lady whom I came to see, on a subject which he resumed as soon as the usual salutations had been interchanged. It appeared that he was to be married on the following morning; and my presence by no means checked the freedom of his communications, which were abundantly ample, while his voice and manner displayed as much indifference as if he had had no interest in the circumstance which he was relating. He let us into all his secrets, informed us of the amount of the lady's fortune, that of the united income which she and he would possess, the equipage and servants which they purposed keeping, &c. &c. He

also gave us the items of his bride's *corbeille**, and descanted most eloquently on the articles which it contained. He next came to a part of his story, which, from the animation which his features assumed, seemed to be the only one which really gave him pleasure, while he told us that four *Peers of France* had promised to be his *témoins* (for, strange to relate, in the land of gallantry, *bridemen*, and not *bridemaids*, officiate on such occasions). He said that one of these was a distinguished Marshal, whose fidelity to the cause of Royalty since the Restoration no one had ever suspected. "Still," added he, "I reluctantly consented, at the entreaty of the family with which I am about to connect myself, (whose politics are not exactly what they should be,) to take this *ennobled soldier*. I wished my *témoins* to have been all "*anciens Chevaliers françois*;" but I console myself in recollecting that

"Le premier qui fut roi, fut un soldat heureux."

He ended the conversation by giving an account of the festival which was to be kept in honour of the wedding. "And how will you pass the next day?" inquired the lady of whom he was the visiter.

* This is a basket covered with white satin and filled with trinkets, lace, and every other article of female attire, which it is the custom in France for the relations of a bride to present to her on the day of her marriage.

"*Sans doute,*" replied he with unruffled gravity, "*nous y ferons l'amour.*" And so, after inviting me as a stranger to the approaching ceremony, he made a formal bow, and disappeared.—I went on the following morning to the church, and found the happy couple and their friends already assembled. The bride was splendidly attired, and displayed a profusion of jewels. The bridegroom and his four noble *témoins*, all wore their full, dressed military uniforms, to which was added a multitude of chivalrous decorations.

After both the religious and the civil ceremony had been performed, one of the three priests who had officiated in the former came forward, and to my surprise addressed *la nouvelle mariée* in a set speech, in which, after pointing out to her the duties which she had sworn to perform, and exhorting her faithfully to discharge the same, he paid a high-flown compliment to the husband whom she had chosen, and likewise to his family; all the members of which he described as guiltless of sharing in those bloody transactions which had overturned the throne and the altar of their native land.

I heard afterwards that this discourse (to say no worse) displayed very bad taste in the person who delivered it; for, whatever might have been the conduct of the relatives of the *gentleman*, the

father of her whom he had just espoused took part in the Revolution, and had ended his career as Chamberlain to Napoleon. So unwilling are these pretended ministers of peace to avail themselves of opportunities which thus fortunately occur, of calming, by the dictates of religion, the hatred and violence of opposing factions!

My principal reason for mentioning this wedding, and the conversation which preceded it, is, that, besides presenting some peculiarities strictly French, the gentleman's remarks showed that vanity (perhaps of all passions the strongest and most general) belongs to no particular nation, but is common to all mankind. After reading, in a letter from you received in the morning, those comments in which you express your astonishment at the influence of *great names* in London, I go into a Parisian house on the same day, and meet with a countryman of yours displaying precisely a similar weakness:—nor could any city upstart from Cheapside or Wapping, enriched by selling figs or indigo, have been more delighted at seeing his turtle feast honoured by the presence of four British noblemen, than appeared to be this high-born Gallic bridegroom at having obtained an equal number of French Peers to grace his espousals.

Perhaps had you and I pursued much longer our comparative observations, we should have

ascertained by the test of experience, that poor human nature has to answer for many of those faults which *you* have attributed to England, and *I* to France. Instead of dwelling on such imperfections, we ought mutually to reflect on the many virtues which distinguish and do honour to both nations, and to disdain all praise which may be offered at the expense of a generous rival.

I am pleased to see that Great Britain takes the lead in liberality, and is rapidly laying aside those prejudices by which it was formerly disgraced. Fifty years ago, a foreigner no sooner appeared in London than he was followed and abused, and "*French dog*" and other offensive terms applied to him. All this is now happily changed; and while we see, not only in the capital but in the most distant villages, crowds of itinerant musicians from France and Italy, who wander about in their national *costume* and are not only kindly treated but liberally paid, a French Theatre has been opened in the metropolis, and is constantly filled with a respectable audience. I fear France presents a very different picture, and that at no time was her antipathy against the English more violent than at this moment. If, in proof of this, a stronger example could be given than the scene of riot which the *Theatre de la Porte St. Martin* lately exhibited, when a company of Comedians attempted to perform an English play, I would mention what I

witnessed a few evenings since. I went to *Les François* to see the representation of *Jeanne d'Arc*, and at the conclusion of the piece loud vociferations of "*Barbares Anglois! Chiens d'Anglois! Quelle nation barbare!*" &c. burst from all sides of the house, and not less from the Boxes than from the Pit, while many an angry look was directed against myself. Nor is this feeling confined to the lower ranks: it is shared by all; and every person in France, no matter what his situation may be, seems to think it an act of patriotism to testify a decided hatred to the English, who, if lately enemies and conquerors, conducted themselves, while in military occupation of part of this country, according to the acknowledgement of all parties, in a way which ought to have ensured them a very different return.

But to refer to your letter.—I confess that that *certain set*, which you have so often made the subject of your critiques, possesses a much stronger influence than it deserves in the arrangements of social life in London: still, believe me that there are numberless respectable families who despise its follies, resist its authority, and avoid as contagious all connexion with its members.

While on this subject, I must not forget to tell you that the *certain set* of London has an *affiliated society* here, which usurps a similar power over the miscellaneous mob of English emigrants who

since the Peace have settled at Paris, and who, without any of the virtues, have brought with them (besides its late hours and expensive habits) all the vices and follies of the country from which, for various reasons, they have found it convenient to retreat.

It is precisely because I do not think that what is called the *first* is the *best* society of the English Capital, that I wished your stay to be extended long enough to give you a chance of contracting intimacies with the wise, good, humane and learned, who abound in London, but who, like the ore of a valuable mine, must be sought for with time, trouble and exertion.

I believe the British metropolis is seldom liked till after a residence of some years. I suspect the opposite of that *dictum* to be true of Paris. On arriving here, every body is pleased; it is, indeed, impossible not to be enchanted with the variety of lively amusement which seems to strew the path of life with a profusion of roses.—Of all the frequenters of this gay city, the English are they who partake most largely of its diversified enjoyments; but they are also those who become the soonest satiated. They drink to the dregs of the cup of pleasure, and then in disgust throw away the poisoned chalice.

With regard to myself, I have lived here long enough already to be satisfied, that among the in-

habitants of this town, persons of the highest talents, most extensive knowledge, and purest morals, are by no means rare; and, in spite of the prevailing hatred against the English, such as have come hither strongly recommended by partial and popular friends like my correspondent, will be hospitably received, and cannot fail to be gratified with their excursion.

But few of our countrymen get sufficiently domesticated with the French to discover the thousand good qualities which a more intimate acquaintance would have disclosed; they only see the Parisians when they appear (may I be permitted to use the phrase?) *en grand costume*, and that in a dress which is never becoming.

They find the dinners (if they are fortunate enough to receive invitations to any except at the houses of their countrymen) too short, and the *soirées* too formal. They are occasionally delighted with the exertions of the talents of Talma in Tragedy, and with the no less wonderful comic powers of *Mademoiselle Mars*; but *to them* the Theatre, that constant source of enjoyment to a Frenchman, never becomes a pursuit of daily interest.

They miss the ease, idleness and gossip of their London Clubs; the social circle of intimate friends, in which they have been accustomed to pass their afternoons; and, above all, that food for

thought and manly conversation which a free Press, and a free Press only, can afford. Putting therefore all these circumstances together, I am inclined to think, that of the mighty crowds who annually flock hither from our shores, the number of those who would wish to extend their stay beyond a few weeks is very small indeed; probably it is confined to such as have contracted the fatal habit of high play, or trusted their happiness to the equally dangerous and equally irresistible dominion of a "*belle Françoise.*"

Adieu!

THE END.


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